

MASSES: 1911 -- 1917
A STUDY IN AMERICAN REBELLION

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CHAPTER I

A NEW SPIRIT

Seven momentous years, 1911 to 1917, were focussed in the scintillating Masses magazine. Owned and published cooperatively by the editors in New York, the periodical was unofficially a representative of left-wing socialist thought; yet with its eclectic nature, it caught and held the exciting and optimistic general radicalism of the years leading to World War I. Dedicated to democracy and liberty and based on the scientific theories of pragmatism and instrumentalism as well as Marxian socialism, the magazine passed through a brilliant, revolutionary, yet anti-dogmatic career which touched every area of liberal thought in a period characterized by magnificently hopeful gains for all progressive forces in American society and culture. As these hopes vanished in the disillusionment of war, so the Masses was destroyed by the war machine. Its last years recorded the fate of a native radicalism which for a time nearly disappeared from the American scene.

The fighting spirit of the Masses had innumerable sources in the history of the American struggle for freedom. From the demand for religious and democratic liberties sought by Roger Williams and Anne Hutchinson, from the insistence on freedom from political and economic tyranny espoused by Samuel Adams and Thomas Paine, from the mass opposition to the "money power" typified by Andrew Jackson and Martin Van Buren, from the Utopian dreams of nineteenth century collectivists at New Harmony or Brook Farm, from William Lloyd Garrison's demand to be heard on the subject of black slavery, from the struggle for workingmen's

freedom by the Knights of Labor, from Henry George and Edward Bellamy and the Grangers and the Populists and a host of others, the Masses drew strength and a sense of tradition. In its own right, the magazine was a protest against the conditions of the industrial society of the early years of the twentieth century. As such it represented a new realization of the nature of the United States and its people.

"The United States in the eighties and nineties," wrote historian Dixon Ryan Fox in sweeping generalization, "was trembling between two worlds, one rural and agricultural, the other urban and industrial. In this span of years the fateful decision was made. Traditional America gave way to a new America, one more akin to Western Europe than to its own former self, yet retaining an authentic New World quality."¹ With this change came confusion and conflict -- a grasping for new answers to new problems. The twentieth century opened with the battle between individualism and collectivism. By 1912, John Haynes Holmes, a leader of the moderate clerical "left" of the social gospel, felt that "all this individual independence is now forever a thing of the past, save in a few hidden corners of the world. The frontier has practically disappeared, never to return. Society has everywhere developed and expanded until men must live together dependent upon one another or not at all."²

The chief need of the new century's early decades was to give some kind of focus to the rising discontent and frustration. The perennial struggle of the farmers of the West, the violent and bloody battles of

1 Arthur M. Schlesinger, The Rise of the City (New York, 1935), xiv.

2 John Haynes Holmes, The Revolutionary Function of the Modern Church (New York, 1912), 63-3.

labor, and the growing uneasiness of the middle classes squeezed by industrial and financial centralization demonstrated that the people "were beginning," as Louis Adamic said, "to realize more clearly that they were being caught in a combination of circumstances distinctly unfavorable to their economic and social advancement."³ After the defeat of the Knights of Labor by the American Federation of Labor and the absorption of the Greenbackers and Populists by Bryan and the free-silver Democracy, neither laborer nor farmer had any place to go for light or for action. Even the middle classes began to feel the lack of a sense of direction.

To satisfy the thirst for knowledge and guidance, the dramatically serious muckrakers emerged to tell the people through the new low-priced magazines, whose circulation they did so much to increase, the results of their investigation of every phase of American life.⁴ Ida Tarbell, Lincoln Steffens, Upton Sinclair, Charles E. Russell, David Graham Phillips and many others documented one aspect of America after another and always ended with an economic problem -- every evil led to the "trust" and the men of economic power.

For most of the first decade the muckrakers and the "literature of exposure" dominated the popular magazines. Then they vanished. Theodore Roosevelt may have deluded a few into the belief that he had solved the new problems, but Taft's regime, however solid its achievement, rapidly and ineptly destroyed the illusively successful appearance of its predecessor. Meanwhile, the readers of muckraking journals became

3 Louis Adamic, Dynamite (New York, 1931), 179.

4 See especially Louis Filler, Crusaders for American Liberalism (New York, 1939) and Cornelius Regier, The Era of the Muckrakers (Chapel Hill, 1932).

fewer as the saturation point approached in the monotonous din of exposure. Advertising, which was the principal economic prop of the journals, was withdrawn from muckraking periodicals. B. O. Flower, whose Arena had printed serious analysis before the muckraking era, sighted the universal economic villain. "But the cheap magazines, like the daily papers, were vulnerable," he wrote. "They depended on the advertisers for their life. This was a source of fatal weakness."⁵ Charles E. Russell, socialist as well as muckraker, stated the case more pointedly: "Autopsy: Muck-raking in America came to its death by strangulation at the hands of persons and Interests perfectly well known."⁶ The conclusions of Ellis O. Jones, printed in the Masses, pointedly revealed the weakness of the muckrakers:⁷

Other writers [aside from Lawson] were more chary about their remedies. They announced themselves more frankly and humbly as mere reporters. They told their stories well and retired, retired in fact, if not in theory. They retired as effective and popular muck-rakers. At the same time, the magazines retired as muck-rakers. Only one of them retired in anything like a formal way. That was McClure's Magazine. As a money-making publisher McClure was perhaps wise in his day and generation. He saw he had gone the limit of interesting exposure. To go farther would be to go too far, would be to bridge the broad psychological and economic chasm which lay between a social condition and the remedy which must also be social.

Allowing for the possibility that the achievement of the muck-rakers was to be equated with the later success of Woodrow Wilson's program, in which they certainly had at least an indirect share, what did they accomplish in their time if they were ultimately dull and only

5 B. O. Flower, Progressive Men, Women, and Movements (Boston, 1914), 154.

6 Charles E. Russell, Bare Hands and Stone Walls (New York, 1933), 190.

7 "Magazines, Morgan, and Muck-raking," Masses, I, 10 (April, 1911).

superficially perceptive? As journalists they were concerned for the most part with facts and external truth, not philosophic or economic analysis; but they did succeed in giving far-reaching popular voice to the prevailing dissatisfaction and uneasy conscience of masses of Americans. Their lens gathered the scattered rays of fact about national life and brought the light to bear on the economics of industrialism, politics, religion, indeed all phases of society.

Many trained economists, of course, did not need to be told by the muckrakers of the need for a new approach to economics. Richard T. Ely, John R. Commons, E. R. A. Seligman and their followers had already promulgated an anti-classical economics and had begun their pragmatic investigations of an industrial society and its labor force. But to the people at large, the magazines and the muckrakers brought new light. The great economic problem, which clearly had not been solved by the Sherman Act, was what to do about the "trusts." Few needed the Pujo report to tell them that the nation was coming under the domination of a system of finance capital. The muckrakers had done the job. When they had finished, their product was indeed a "Dissenters' Golden Age."

If a graph were made of the rise and decline in America of that quality of mind which, for want of a better term, may be called "social consciousness," the peak of insurgency that had been rising since 1900 and that was finally to break on the rocks of the World War reached its crest in the year [1912] in which Roosevelt ran for President on a platform of Social Righteousness, Wilson unfurled the banner of the New Freedom, Debs polled 900,000 votes without benefit of national woman suffrage, the Lawrence strike put the word "syndicalism" on the front page of every newspaper, and Emma Goldman became one of the most popular lecturers on the American platform.⁸

8 Lillian Symes and Travers Clement, Rebel America (New York, 1934), 265. This book is a sprightly, undogmatic and readable account of American social revolt, both authoritative and witty.

If there was some agreement about causes, there was considerably less unanimity about solutions. Louis D. Brandeis, in a series of articles in Harper's Weekly, later published as a book with the fighting title, Other People's Money (1914), advocated the restoration of competition and a return to the dominance of the farmer and small business man through reform and regulation responsible increasingly to the people. This program was much the same as Wilson's "New Freedom." Herbert Croly, in The Promise of American Life (1908), accepted the massive concentration of the trust as inevitable and desirable, but stressed the need to control the "bad trusts" through a stronger federal government working in the interests of the people. This "grand design . . . to outflank Western radicalism and preserve the 'benevolent' trusts"⁹ markedly shaped the development of Roosevelt's "New Nationalism." The Socialists, of course, accepted expanding monopoly eagerly as a natural evolution toward the one big "trust" which could be taken over by the masses and become the Cooperative Commonwealth.

However much economics was recognized as a fundamental root of increasingly difficult problems, any major attempt at solutions was bound up with men, parties and political action. Matthew Josephson, whose studies span the years of the "robber barons" as well as the "president makers," noted the high political culture of those years of the early twentieth century in which the symbolic value of political leaders was peculiarly high. Unlike the last part of the nineteenth century, "man was more than ever the political animal, and the political leader

9 Matthew Josephson, The President Makers (New York, 1940), 431.

was more the key figure than he had been since the 1860's."¹⁰ The progress of the early years of Roosevelt's administration had been limited and was easily enough undone, but this seemed of little moment if the "Colonel" was available to lead the hosts to Armageddon. Although Wilson in retrospect may seem somewhat cold and aloof as well as more than a little opportunistic, at that time the Presbyterian "scholar in politics" seemed the answer to political and economic corruption. Even Debs and the Socialists, for all of the violence of the class-war slogans, looked more like reforming political crusaders than "foreign" revolutionaries. Only the Taft Republicans failed to connect the battle for political power with economic democracy. Indeed, in 1912 it seemed as if a social reformation would follow, whoever was elected.

Another major effort to solve economic problems was being made through the Protestant churches.¹¹ For years, advocates of the "social gospel" had been struggling to establish it as the churches' answer to a growing dichotomy between evangelical morality and business and industrial ethics. "The pioneers of the social gospel saw clearly four types of problems," wrote Charles Hopkins in summary. "They questioned the prevalent rationalization of unrestricted competition by classical economics; they regarded the conflict of labor and capital as the crux of the maladjustments attendant upon the industrial revolution; they condemned the business of the 'Great Barbecue'; and they began an attack

¹⁰ Ibid., v.

¹¹ Secular historians perhaps tend to underestimate the intangible power of religion in American life in the period after the Puritan domination of New England until World War I.

upon the problems of urban life, notably the relation of the church to the masses."¹² As one political answer to economic questions was to return the government to the people, so one religious answer was to return the church to social activity by taking it back to the people.

Accompanying the social awareness of the church was a re-orientation of theology to reflect scientific and sociological views and the historical and biographical discoveries of the "higher criticism." This new theology made full use of the evangelical impulse which, since Jonathan Edwards and the Great Awakening, had played so important a part in the personal and community life of America, while at the same time it tried to shift the heretofore dominant otherworldliness toward an increased consciousness of the individual Christian's place in this world.

For three hundred years Protestant theology had stressed the relationship of the individual soul to God. But nineteenth-century science had destroyed the notion of society as an aggregate of discrete units and had substituted the concept of a social organism. Thus the idea of an individual abstracted from all social relationships had no corresponding reality. It followed that the salvation of the individual soul ceased to have meaning. Obviously there could be no salvation of the individual apart from that of society as a whole. It was this idea that gave the "Social" Gospel its unique significance.¹³

If in the nineteenth century, the preaching of the social gospel was limited to a minority among the clergy, a few years later the settlement house movement had become an established fact, more and more churches and clergymen were trying to reach the people whose cash contributions would scarcely build more awesome temples of the spirit, and

12 Charles H. Hopkins, The Rise of the Social Gospel in American Protestantism (New Haven, 1940), 24.

13 James Dombrowski, The Early Days of Christian Socialism in America (New York, 1936), 17.

there was a flood of literature on the subject. "Prominent metropolitan ministers and obscure country preachers, college and theological school professors, religious journalists and certain social scientists shared in this widespread concern."¹⁴ The acceptance of the class structure of society, of the reality of the class struggle, everything in socialism except its atheism marked the typical, leftward-moving thought of Walter Rauschenbusch, who in 1908 became the acknowledged leader of the social gospel movement as well as a prime-mover in the foundation of the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America. He wrote: "Humanity is waiting for a revolutionary Christianity which will call the world evil and change it We need a combination between the faith of Jesus in the need and the possibility of the kingdom of God, and the modern comprehension of the organic development of human society."¹⁵ Karl Marx was transformed at heart into an evangelical; the kingdom of God was the Cooperative Commonwealth plus the Christian religion.

The popular journalistic and religious spirit was matched by the intellectual temper of the times. It seemed that the new world of machines and a tightly interwoven society was understood in its essence and rapidly developing to a rational solution. The resolution of conflict came naturally from the premises of biological naturalism. As social Darwinism had been utilized as a weapon in the defense of the status quo in the era of exploitation, so biological views could as easily and with more penetrating logic become the applied sociology of

¹⁴ Hopkins, Rise of the Social Gospel, 215.

¹⁵ Walter Rauschenbusch, Christianity and the Social Crisis (New York, 1910), 91.

Lester Ward, the pragmatism of William James, the instrumentalism of John Dewey or the iconoclastic economics of Thorstein Veblen. The idea of a society in process of being developed into a continuously expanding and progressive future drew deeply on the rational spirit of the Enlightenment, but appealed as well to the evangelical drive in American protestantism. God's Commonwealth and Yankee shrewdness were not far removed from the Brotherhood of the Kingdom and the realism of welfare capitalism.

Marxist critics have emphasized with V. F. Calverton that these years marked "the last stand of the petty bourgeois."¹⁶ The explanation is neat and has obtained wide credence among non-Marxian analysts; however it would seem to distort the times to fit a pattern of abstract ideas. The shapeless Marxian-Hegelian "thesis" of the middle class, although much bandied about as a term of the time, was actually no entity at all. Excluding Taft and his followers, and possibly Roosevelt and his backers -- but not his cohorts, American society as a whole was moving to the left, toward an understanding of twentieth-century industrial society. Nowhere is this more clearly illustrated than in the naturalization of "the revolution" in American socialism.

Experiments with Utopian and Christian communism had been a part of the American story ever since the unsuccessful experiment of the Pilgrims during their first year at Plymouth. The "New Jerusalem" added the peculiar features of Fourier and Owen in such colonies as Brook Farm and New Harmony. Then the vastly increased flood of immigration which

16 V. F. Calverton, The Liberation of American Literature (New York, 1932), 368. According to the author, these years of the new century also marked the freeing of America from the "colonial complex."

followed the disturbances of 1848 in Europe brought thousands who had participated in some kind of political and social activity under the auspices of Marx or others. These "scientific socialists," notably the Germans, carried their theories with them to all parts of America, especially to New York and to the upper Mississippi valley. Although both root and branch were foreign even as to language, the growing industrialization of the United States added fact to theory. Both strengthened revolutionary convictions and led to the foundation in 1876-7 of the Socialist Labor Party devoted under the authoritative leadership of Daniel De Leon to strict Marxist principles.¹⁷

As industrialization proceeded and the imported socialists were absorbed by the "melting pot," it was to be expected that dogmatic ideas would come closer to native reality; but perhaps because the principles were so strictly held and party discipline under De Leon was so ruthless, the Socialist Labor Party obtained little hold on either intellectual or labor thought. Gompers, although he recorded his early interest in socialism, was perhaps typical of American labor in turning away from so absolute and unyielding a doctrine.¹⁸ The Party attempted to set up "dual" unions to combat the increasingly successful American Federation of Labor, but failed, and ultimately, in 1899, split wide open on the

17 Charles A. Madison, Critics and Crusaders (New York, 1947-8) contains an excellent brief biography of De Leon in which John Reed is quoted (470) as saying: "Premier Lenin is a great admirer of Daniel De Leon, considering him the greatest of modern socialists — the only one who had added anything to Socialist thought since Marx." This has not been documented in the works of Lenin, but there is no question that De Leon was important as a theorist, if inept as a tactician. He did not play his leading role in the Socialist Labor Party until the '90s and after.

18 Samuel Gompers, Seventy Years of Life and Labor (New York, 1925), I, 50 et. seq.

union issue when the "Rochester" group under the leadership of Morris Hillquit and others broke away to concentrate on education and political action.

Meanwhile a middle-Western socialism was growing, much closer to the Utopian tradition and to the parallel and often over-lapping Populism. The Brotherhood of the Co-operative Commonwealth (the name speaks for itself), with its schemes for colonizing socialism on the fast-vanishing frontier, joined with the thoroughly native labor movement of Eugene Debs to form the Social Democratic Party in 1898. Bryan had crucified Populism on a cross of silver, and the rebels moved slightly left to socialism. In July, 1901 the unity convention at Indianapolis brought together the Social Democracy with the "Rochester group" to form the Socialist Party of America. De Leon, however, remained outside and kept his theory and his followers pure, if scarcely Americanized.

This new heterogeneous coalition, the Socialist Party, drew deeply on American as well as European strivings, including "all the confused activities of socialistically inclined individuals outside the Socialist Labor Party -- Left-Wing Populists and Nationalists, Fabians, Christian Socialists, even many pure Utopians"¹⁹ Not only were native Americans active again in a radical movement, but "the radicals themselves, or at least many of them, were learning to talk the American language, and were working with, rather than preaching at, the American masses."²⁰

19 Symes and Clement, Rebel America, 206.

20 Ibid., 218.

For all of its inclusiveness, socialism remained a revolutionary faith based on the class struggle despite the continuous danger of falling into bureaucratic parliamentarianism in which words, ballots and political office replaced industrial reality. The nineteenth century scientific socialist movements in America had tried to stick close to the workers, but the growing strength of the American Federation of Labor with its fear of political parties as such and its devotion to the immediate aims of only skilled workers had left socialist leaders, whether of the school of De Leon or of Hillquit, without a real proletarian base. Of these turn-of-the-century leaders Max Nomad could say with some justice: "but these leaders were no revolutionists. That specific capital which they possessed, the privilege of a higher education, placed them above the working masses and enabled them to establish themselves as one of the many privileged groups of the bourgeois world. They were editors, politicians, organizers; preachers of the new gospel of a Proletarian Kingdom, apparently not of this world — or, at least, several generations away."²¹

Within the ten years from 1901 to 1911 the situation changed. Debs[^] and Ben Hanford appealed directly and fundamentally to the workers; the I. W. W., strange combination of the brawling boisterousness of the frontier with anarcho-syndicalism, was represented on the executive board of the Party by Bill Haywood; and even the A. F. of L., under the impetus of the McNamara case (and before its disastrous conclusion) threatened through

²¹ Max Nomad, Rebels and Renegades (New York, 1932), 401.

Gompers to abandon the major parties and embrace political action.²²

Louis Adamic's general summary seems correct: "Never before had there been such nationwide class-consciousness on the part of the working class of America as in the last half of 1911. There were practically no right and left wings in the movement."²³ The situation was so serious in the last years of the first decade as well as in 1911 that the Atlantic Monthly and President Taft could agree with the Socialists, although with somewhat different feelings, that Socialism was coming to power with the surety of mathematical progress at the polls.²⁴

The party vote increased from 402,400 in 1904 to 897,011 in 1912, by which time over seventy per cent of the party membership was native-born. "The size of the vote -- even in 1912 the party polled only 5.9 per cent of the total of 15,031,169 -- was not an indication of weakness," wrote Nathan Fine, "but strangely enough, of great strength. It showed that close to a million Americans were willing to give their devotion to a party or a personality, even when neither had an immediate chance. And it was more than a protest vote because most of it continued to be regularly recorded."²⁵ Schenectady and Milwaukee elected Socialist adminis-

22 The famous McNamara case resulted from the dynamiting, with unexpected casualties, of the building of Harrison Gray Otis' anti-union Los Angeles Times. Gompers and all of labor supported the dynamiters as martyrs, only to be repudiated by a confession of guilt brought about by the interference of Lincoln Steffens and the legal necessity of defense counsel, Clarence Darrow. The effect was marked on the American Federation of Labor, bringing increased caution and conservatism.

23 Adamic, Dynamite, 250.

24 Rufus W. Weeks in "Signs of the Times," Masses, I, 5 (March, 1910), reported similar opinions by Century Magazine, The Independent, Woodrow Wilson, Theodore Roosevelt and George W. Perkins.

25 Nathan Fine, Labor and Farmer Parties in the United States, 1828-1928 (New York, 1928), 216.

trations; the state legislatures of half a dozen states contained Socialists; and Victor Berger was sent to Congress.

Whether or not each voter was a revolutionary must remain moot, but the platform was startling and clear. It demanded public ownership of all monopolies and trusts, railroads, telegraphs, telephone, other means of transportation, public utilities and mines. Also advocated were a program of public works to relieve unemployment and shorter hours of labor. These were the "immediate" demands of the Party and most certainly revolutionary. Walter Rauschenbusch reflected the understanding of the time when he wrote: "Socialism is the ultimate and logical outcome of the labor movement It is inconceivable from the point of view of that class that it should stop short of complete independence and equality as long as it has the power to move on, and independence and equality for the working class must mean the collective ownership of the means of production and the abolition of the present two-class arrangement of industrial society."²⁶ He spoke as a Protestant minister, not as a Socialist propagandist.

Revolutionary socialism had indeed become naturalized. If it had lost the dogmatic certainty of a strictly disciplined party, it had gained breadth — enough to serve as the center for an even more diverse group. As the social upheaval moved toward 1912, most intelligent Americans of whatever class or group espoused some form of social, artistic or literary protest. Soon it was true that "to be a socialist, a syndicalist, an anarchist, a feminist or, at the very least, a left-wing liberal was merely to be in tune with the pre-war sociological infinite."²⁷ The word "radical"

²⁶ Rauschenbusch, Christianity and the Social Crisis, 408.

²⁷ Symes and Clement, Rebel America, 266.

needed to be added to "renaissance" to give the true feeling of those stirring years. The records were filled with the varied aspects of a general urge to revolt. True enough, "the intellectual, the artist, the poet, the journalist, the clergyman are the most articulate of rebels and a few such swallows can do more to create the illusion of summer than swarms of worker bees";²⁸ but more significant for an understanding of the time was the fact that most of the swallows suddenly identified themselves with the bees as sharing a common need both to eat and to "live" in the fullest possible sense.

For the future leaders of the Masses, the shift was by no means without preparation. Max Eastman recorded in his autobiography a conversation with Ida Rauh after a Hillquit lecture.²⁹ Pleased with the socialists' ideal, but disliking the emotional concept of a class struggle filled with hatred, he was guided to Marx and others to show him that this same dislike was central to socialism; the ultimate goal of its violence was the elimination of social strife. The inner turmoil of long years of conflict with atheism, rationalism and other discontents came to a focus for Eastman with the belief that socialism offered a method through which to work with the tools of science for a better world. Joining the party was the act of a particular day, but years of thought, study and feeling went to make the moment.

Art Young, one of the greatest of American cartoonists and a leading spirit of the Masses from its beginning, had moved slowly from reactionary conservatism to an increasingly sharp observation of social and political life. He was forty before he became a Socialist, and his conver-

28 Ibid., 266.

29 Max Eastman, The Enjoyment of Living (New York, 1948), 254-5.

sion was anything but sudden, although 1910 marked a definite decision. "Many elements went into my decision," he later wrote. "For years the truth about the underlying cause of the exploitation and misery of the world's multitudes had been knocking at the door of my consciousness, but not until that year did it begin to sound clearly."³⁰ The figures he had drawn and labeled "greed" took on the bolder name of "capitalism."

John Sloan, the painter, was led to socialism through using his eyes and brush with a paradoxically ruthless tenderness on the subject-matter of the great city. About 1910 he stopped painting and devoted all the energy of his drawing to work for the party. Floyd Dell, who succeeded Francis Hackett as the editor of the "Friday Literary Supplement" of the Chicago Evening Post before moving on to New York late in 1912, had been a socialist of some kind since childhood. For artist and writer, the transition was easy and without heroics. Malcolm Cowley, who was growing up during this period, wrote perceptively of the transition:³¹

Once a writer had recognized that society contained hostile classes, that the result of their conflict was uncertain and would affect his own fortunes, then he ceased to believe that political action was silly: he became "politicalized." If he also decided that the class whose interests lay closest to his own was the working class, that the home he was seeking lay with them, he became a radical. When the change took place, it was almost as simple as that.

Allowing for a somewhat less cold self-interest and a much greater youthful idealism, the simplicity which Cowley applied to the 1930's fitted with even greater aptness the artists of twenty years earlier. Whether one looked at the social gospel, the labor movement or even the anarchists, the trend of the time was unmistakable. As Max Eastman said:

30 Art Young, Art Young, His Life and Times (New York, 1939), 263.

31 Malcolm Cowley, Exile's Return (New York, 1934), 241.

"When Fabian socialism invades the Sixty Families, revolutionary socialism invades the labor movement and the intelligentsia"32

The literary spirit of the fin de siècle had expressed itself increasingly in prose and newspaper journalism, as Fred Pattee soon observed.³³ This prose had become increasingly serious and in some cases even violent and bitter after the brief revival of historical fiction coincident with the Spanish-American War. "The alteration of taste, from the soft to the surly, was so abrupt that it defies any easy answer from the mob psychologist," wrote John Chamberlain. "It was as if the American public, after downing one last glass of syrup, had cried out in a spasm for a regimen of tannin, lemon juice and brandy."³⁴ An angry and disillusioned spirit marked the major work of the muckrakers, the brutal strength of Upton Sinclair and Jack London and even the more deft and delicate novels of social realists like Winston Churchill and Booth Tarkington. The conclusions of the muckrakers were not hopeful; and the social novelists, although serious enough, were superficial in thought and dealt primarily with surfaces in the realistic manner of William Dean Howells.

By 1911, however, Floyd Dell in Chicago could feel "Something was in the air. Something was happening, about to happen -- in politics, in literature, in art. The atmosphere became electric with it."³⁵ His friend George Cram Cook had told him that "Frank Norris, Upton Sinclair and Jack London, even with David Graham Phillips thrown in, did not make

32 Eastman, Enjoyment of Living, 390.

33 See Fred L. Pattee, A History of American Literature Since 1870 (New York, 1915).

34 John Chamberlain, Farewell to Reform (New York, 1932), 144.

35 Floyd Dell, Homcoming (New York, 1933), 217.

a new literary era."³⁶ Even so, Dell concluded that "it began to seem certain that the time was soon coming when the literary sansculottes would swarm over the barricades"³⁷ The spirit was different; it was hopeful. Randolph Bourne was soon to record in America the same kind of revolt of youth which had already been observed by Ibsen and a host of others in Europe. Modern times were to join moral issues to economic, political and religious controversy. "The young of America did not want to wait until middle age to claim their values. They wanted values right away. And their values were not those of their elders," wrote Albert Parry, historian of American Bohemia.³⁸ The result was to add to naturalism and journalistic methods in prose a poetic revival in which free verse competed with established forms revitalized by new content and fresh language.

What was true in spirit among the writers was also true for the artists. American painting had reached a new high in the realistic tradition of Eakins and Homer with the showing of the "Eight" in 1908. This "revolutionary black-gang," a title which had some aptness as applied to four of the eight painters only, had looked long and hard at the reality of the great city both in Philadelphia and New York and recorded what they saw with loving care for the most bitterly realistic of subject matter. Yet American painting was not for some years to follow this venture, and it was in the medium of the graphic arts that achievement in line with the "radical renaissance" was to take place. Newspaper cartoonists

36 Ibid., 191.

37 Ibid., 191.

38 Albert Parry, Garrets and Pretenders (New York, 1933), 188.

and illustrators as well as painters followed the tradition of Nast, Oppen and Homer Davenport with something also of the gentle social observation of W. T. Smedley, but moved gradually away from the English school of draftsmanship toward the heavy power of the German satirical magazines and the biting incisiveness of French drawing. If in the last nineteenth century "most of the abler men were drawn into business and an artist was an anomaly,"³⁹ then in the twentieth century revolt, the artist emerged to give business some of its worst punishment.

Any analysis which concludes that the earnestness devoted to politics and economics, to the violent bitterness of the labor struggle, to unemployment, hunger and poverty was automatically irreconcilable with joyous strength, gusto and sensuous enjoyment of life must inevitably miss the spirit of the times. Genevieve Taggard, anthologist of the Masses-Liberator,¹ verse and active participant in revolutionary causes in the later years after the war, summed up one aspect of the revolt of youth: "The air was clear and exciting and the hour was the hour of seven on a spring morning, May days, indeed There was so much to be said, done, thought, seen, tried out."⁴⁰ But for all their laughter and eagerness, the leaders of the intellectual left were by no means naive -- they could think and fight as well as feel and enjoy.

For both graphic artist and writer a serious problem existed in the selling or even placing of radical work. Of course during the years of the dominance of muckraking, the mass-circulation magazines, led by

39 Frank Jewett Mather, The American Spirit in Art (New Haven, 1927), 307.

40 Genevieve Taggard, May Days (New York, 1925), 2.

McClure's, had welcomed the "literature of exposure," but McClure had led the way out of "radicalism" as he had led the way in. The Socialist press had marked limitations, as Upton Sinclair indicated:⁴¹

The Socialists of America have never been able to maintain an organ of propaganda upon a national scale; the country is too big, and the amount of capital required is beyond their resources. The "Appeal to Reason" was a gift to them from a real estate speculator with a conscience, old J. A. Wayland "Wilshire's Magazine" was a gift from a bill-board advertising man with a sense of humor.

The "Appeal," especially, was a combination club and blunderbuss ill-suited to the keener weapons of Art Young, John Sloan, Max Eastman or Floyd Dell. Serious party journals offered only weighty discussion of ponderous party-line dogma.

There had been a minor wave of "little" magazines toward the end of the nineteenth century "as a protest against the suppression on the part of the established ones of all convictions which were new."⁴² These voices of protest had soon died away, but by December, 1911, the world of magazine publishing again became intensely alive. Hiram Moderwell wrote in The International a survey of "Our Contemporaries":⁴³

There are something like 5,000 magazines in the United States, in addition to the 10,000 newspapers, -- almost as many periodicals as there are newsdealers who carry them. Of these it is safe to say 2,000 are technical or otherwise very limited in territory or in audience to which they appeal. At least 500 are or would like to be "first class" periodicals of large and general circulation. And of these 500 the average reader probably could not name more than thirty. There are then, 470 publications which are aspiring to stand for America as a whole, and which are comparatively unknown.

⁴¹ Upton Sinclair, American Outpost (New York, 1932), 209.

⁴² Algernon Tassin, The Magazine in America (New York, 1916), 323. See also Frederick Hoffman, Charles Allen and Carolyn Ulrich, The Little Magazine (Princeton, 1946).

⁴³ The International, V, 15 (December, 1911).

Among the five hundred was the Masses, born in 1911 to give a voice to the radicalism of Greenwich Village, of the United States and of Europe.

The early Masses was not to live long despite the vital potentialities stirring in the radical unrest and general intellectual ferment of the times. The magazine was fundamentally unsuitable for leadership in so dynamic a period. In addition to a general ineptitude of make-up and style, the Masses reflected an earlier day when American socialism looked to European dogma and precedent rather than to national and local realities. Yet within its pages there was apparent a struggle for realization by powerful new forces which, when the magazine was reborn, would make it one of the most brilliant periodicals yet published in this country. The early Masses was a suggestion of things to come.

The magazine was born through the efforts of Piet Vlag, a Hollander who had been trained in the particular version of the cooperative movement typical of Belgium and the Netherlands, an activity which he passionately wished to propagate in this country.⁴⁴ He worked as a waiter and as manager of the restaurant in the basement of the Rand School, but he was also active in the American Wholesale Cooperative through which he hoped to foster socialist cooperatives. Although Vlag's humor was somewhat heavy and his English markedly uncertain, he had tremendous energy and enthusiasm. He managed to interest Rufus W. Weeks, who was

⁴⁴ Charles Gide in Consumer's Cooperative Societies distinguished this brand as quite different from the better known Rochdale cooperatives. "Thus, the characteristic feature of Belgian cooperation is that it is mixed up with politics," he wrote, "which is not at all the case in other countries -- at any rate, up to the present It is in order to keep in daily touch with him [the workman] and to be able to control his actions more minutely that all Belgian cooperative societies make the selling of bread the basis of their operations." Quoted in Andrew J. Kress, editor, Introduction to the Cooperative Movement (New York, 1941), 54-5.

both a vice-president of the New York Life Insurance Company and a devoted if conservative socialist, in subsidizing a magazine. He then eagerly solicited contributions from artists and writers, getting together without difficulty enough material to publish a first issue in January, 1911.⁴⁵

Vlag dominated the early Masses from its beginning, but the first editor was Thomas Seltzer, translator of Gorki, Hauptmann and others and later a publisher, who was qualified for an editorial job and sufficiently interested, according to Art Young, to have suggested the name for the periodical. As editor he emphasized translations of European stories and the importance of art and literature to socialism without printing any significant work. Seltzer's broad cultural view of social change resulted in little attention to the immediate concerns of either the Socialist Party or the struggles of the workers. "It will publish the best that can be had," he wrote of the new magazine, "not only in the United States, but in the world. It will not publish a story merely because it is original, that is, because written first in the English language. A good story from a foreign tongue, we believe, is preferable to a bad American story."⁴⁶

The theoretic justification of such a policy for a socialist magazine merged propaganda and realistic art. Seltzer believed that

⁴⁵ See Louis Untermeyer, From Another World (New York, 1939), Art Young, Life and Times and Robert Carlton Brown, "Them Asses," The American Mercury, XXX, 404 (December, 1933) for reminiscences of Vlag.

⁴⁶ I, 3 (January, 1911). European stories published during the first months included Ludwig Fulda's "The Fur Coat," E. N. Chirikov's "The Little Sinner," Julius Stettenheim's "The Confidence Man," Stefan Zeromski's "The Vow," a late Tolstoy sketch entitled "Must It Be So?" and Hermann Sudermann's five-part novelette, "Iolanthe's Wedding." All of them had relevance to American socialism at an extreme distance.

the artist's job was to represent life truly as he saw it. That this would strengthen socialism was (fortunately) never in doubt because literature should treat all of life, and any study of the whole of life must lead, if it were truthful, to socialism. He relied on the inevitable movement of history to produce the socialist revolution. Using the great European masters of realism in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries as models, Seltzer advocated a climb together, worker and artist, toward the light.

However valid Seltzer's theories, practice in the magazine contributed little confirmation. Most of the published European stories were second rate, and after four months, the translator was replaced as titular editor by a professional humorist and ex-assistant editor of Puck, Horatio Winslow. Winslow's humor was whimsically light, seasoned with hopeful socialist earnestness. For the last eight months of 1911, he published editorials, dialogues with Vlag, articles on cooperative stores, fiction, poetry and paragraphs which were apparently intended to tease the reader into socialism and cooperatives. Despite an occasional rousing slogan, the socialist revolution scarcely put in an appearance and was ill-fused with conventional uplift.

Even when not officially the editor, Vlag's ideas dominated the selection of articles for the magazine, as immediately became apparent when he took over the editorship during the first eight months of 1912. In addition to his well-known positive advocacy of cooperatives, Vlag was vitally concerned with the controversies troubling the Socialist Party. In 1911-12 the major quarrel within party circles was between political and direct action as methods for the socialist conquest of the state. The German Social Democracy had long since fought this battle

out with an overwhelming victory for the forces believing in political action and education as the best methods for socialism.⁴⁷ The German party was the largest and most influential in the world, and not only Vlag, but many American socialists, especially of German descent, followed the activities of the German party. In practice this meant a devotion to the gradual education and organization of the workers in socialism, slowly cumulative gains through the ballot and a rigid discipline within the party to enforce group political action. The apparent success of the German party led Vlag, Victor Berger and others to look to the German tradition as the perfect example for good American socialists.

The quarrel became bitter in America as a result of the growing dramatic power of the Industrial Workers of the World. This organization, commonly known as the I. W. W., advocated syndicalism as well as a kind of socialism, and therefore stressed the use of sabotage and the direct conquest of power by the unified workers through the general strike. Its rallying cry was "One Big Union," and it preferred to work directly with organized workers rather than through the intricacies of political parties. After the bitter conclusion of the McNamara case, certainly an example of direct action, the battle came to a climax with the expulsion of Bill Haywood of the I. W. W. from Socialist Party councils. This decision, in effect, rejected direct for political action. Vlag and his magazine campaigned actively for the latter method because, as they saw it, any tactics except socialist lectures,

⁴⁷ The perennial quarrel over method has affected most modern revolutionary movements, resulting usually in a split into right and left wings within the local groups and a bitterness of brotherly strife far greater than the battle against an outside enemy. The intricacies of left-wing quarrels can be followed in Harry W. Laidler's overwhelming handbook, Social-Economic Movements (New York, 1944).

discussion, balloting and cooperatives were suicidal for the working classes. In a bold-face editorial headed **KEEP STEP, OR FALL OUT**, his European experience led Vlag inclusively to reject all undisciplined thought and action:⁴⁸

We believe that the time has come for the Socialist party to deal most rigidly with the anarchistic elements which, for lack of another shelter, are knocking at its door. We have no room for rebellious individualists who are sore on the System because they cannot beat it. We have no room for ambitious intellectuals of muck-raking activities. We have no room for self-seeking politicians. We have no room for philosophical anarchists. We have no room for "spit-in-the-fire-growlers." The International Socialist Party is a workingmen's party, called into life because of the injustice the present system heaps upon this part of humanity We have no room for compromisers.

Vlag's socialist mansion was reduced to the tiny proportions of Daniel De Leon's. Eugene Debs, who represented the wider and freer element in American socialism, was significantly not mentioned except for a reproduction of his photograph accompanying a hymn to the soon-to-triumph political action of the great Socialist Party. To most of the younger radical Americans of the time, it was Vlag who seemed to be the compromiser, working in the tradition which belonged in their country chiefly to the German-language Federations. "I had seen a copy of The Masses," Max Eastman wrote of his pre-editorial days, "and remained indifferent to it because of its dull make-up and very 'yellow' brand of socialism. Its brotherly evangel of humanitarianism and zeal for consumer's cooperatives I then regarded with scorn."⁴⁹ Vlag's dogmatic

⁴⁸ III, 3 (June, 1912). Behind the violence of this attack was the great split of the European radical movements which resulted from the nineteenth century quarrel between Bakunin, the anarchist, and Karl Marx. The memory remained bitter, especially to Marxists.

⁴⁹ Eastman, The Enjoyment of Living, 394. Tags applied to the political and direct actionists included the conventional "yellow" and "red."

narrowness and European references were ill-suited to the reality and breadth of the growing spirit of American revolt.

Like his editorials, the articles represented Vlag's orthodox socialism. Contributors included, among others, Lena Morrow Lewis, socialist agitator, Samuel Hopkins Adams, Victor Berger, Milwaukee socialist and a member of the party elected to Congress, Barnet Braverman, Randolph Bourne, Louis Untermeyer, Eugene Wood, an editor for Life as well as a socialist, Walter Lippmann, secretary for a time to socialist Mayor Lunn of Schenectady, and Job Harriman, candidate for mayor of Los Angeles who lost the election chiefly because of the McNamara case. All of these writers were concerned with educating the workers and the collegians (presumably members of the Intercollegiate Socialist Society) and belaboring direct action in the interests of the "One Flag Party." Rufus Weeks, who contributed regularly to the magazine he was supporting, summed up the Masses' attitude toward the class struggle. "The Socialist has, however, no idea that the struggles will be one of physical force; he realizes joyfully that our centuries' experience in the forms of democratic government have brought us out of the way of thinking that issues are to be fought out with literal weapons," he answered a critic of the magazine's attack on the Boy Scouts. "In modern political encounters we still use the language of warfare, but the words do not mean what they say -- the only fighting there will be is jaw fighting."⁵⁰ Weeks, reportedly, was a gentle old man, mild and elegant. The I. W. W., the Lawrence strikers and the West Virginia coal miners, fighting not voting for existence, were most certainly not.

⁵⁰ I. 10 (May, 1911).

Aside from the attention to political action and a flood of articles on cooperatives by Vlag and Winslow, the struggling magazine found two other issues during 1911-12. The first was a violent attack on the Boy Scouts led by anti-militarist George R. Kirkpatrick, who believed that the capitalists were training an army of workers' sons to turn against their parents to put down industrial strife.⁵¹ This campaign, which began in February, 1911, was used to build circulation through the offer of free copies of Kirkpatrick's book, War, -- What For?, from which John Sloan's violent illustrations were reproduced as advertising on the back cover. Eventually Vlag offered to equip juvenile salesmen with a Socialist Scout uniform, modeled on the European "Cadet" pattern, as a prize for subscriptions.

For its other campaign, the early Masses attempted to help along the general propaganda for the eight-hour day by sponsoring the foundation of a national organization to be called the "Masses Labor League" designed to present Congress with a program for the eight-hour day in inter-state commerce. The McNamara case was used as a point of reference to show the superiority of political and educational action. After claiming that the plan was not "invented by some ambitious intellectual" but "developed out of economic necessity," citing the proper European precedent, and outlining the proposed act, Vlag claimed that the measure would result directly in revolution because with more time to think, the workers would

51 It is only just to say that many scout troops at the time learned military drill and had instruction in the handling of weapons. Baden-Powell scouting did not necessarily lead to gentle wood-crafting. Kirkpatrick was, however, excessively violent. His tone of abuse was generally reserved, by the early Masses, for the direct-actionists.

inevitably become socialists.⁵² There was a suggestion in the continued campaign that all of the local branches of the league would without doubt subscribe to the Masses, but ostensibly all was lofty and disinterested idealism designed to offset the dread stupidities of the direct-actionists. Vlag seems to have genuinely believed that he was revolutionary in advocating the eight-hour day, whereas Gompers and the American Federation of Labor were not.

In addition to articles on American problems, there were a few published on international socialism which also followed the same pattern of "political opportunism" typical of the majority element of the German party. Paul Louis, Karl Kautsky, Dan Irving and Carlo de Fornaro all stressed the gradual education of the workers and peasants in Germany, England and Mexico. As they saw it, Socialism depended completely on literacy and political action.

American political analysis, except for praise of the Socialist Party, was almost entirely omitted from the Masses, another symptom of remoteness in those exceptionally political years. Bouck White, clergyman with Harvard and Union Theological Seminary training, who carried Christian Socialism to its ultimate in such books as The Call of the Carpenter, covered the Bull Moose convention in a heavy-handed, fantastic, apocalyptic style speaking as the mouthpiece of the Lord: "From whence comes the stink of the stolen wealth that is backing him [TR]? Stenchful it mounts to my nostrils. I cannot away with the malodor of it."⁵³

52 See Vlag's prospectus, III, 7 (January, 1912) and Winslow's article, I, 6 (November, 1911). Note that Volume I of the magazine included the twelve issues for 1911, but that beginning in 1912, a decision was made to group only six issues in a volume. Volume II was omitted.

53 IV, 5 (August, 1912). White wrote three articles for the magazine during its last months under Vlag.

Vlag, in his last advertising campaign, offered reprints of White's purple prose at one dollar for a hundred leaflets.

The final issue under Vlag's editorship, that of August, 1912, included an analysis of Theodore Roosevelt by Charles T. Hallinan which showed some of the possibilities of criticism of the larger political movements from the left. Typically, however, the magazine rested with Eugene Wood's hopeful optimism. "Anybody with any head for figures at all," he wrote, "can see that it won't take twenty years for the Socialist vote to gain control of the government; nothing like twenty years at the rate it is growing now."⁵⁴ The Socialist gains in 1912 were hopeful enough, but the Masses failed to recognize that the increased vote represented a broadening of the party rather than a great increase in narrow and dogmatic class consciousness by the workers. The intellectual task of a periodical demanded leadership closely in touch with political and industrial realities and the general spirit of revolt in all areas of life.

In artistic matters, the early Masses gave some promise of what was to come when the magazine was reorganized. In both fiction and pictures, some few things of real merit appeared, and most gave promise of new vitality. Only in poetry was the magazine too early to take advantage of fresh currents. Although Louis Untermeyer was struggling for new expression, his verse had as yet taken on little power, and he contributed much the best poetry published by the magazine. "I contributed occasional verse," he later said wryly, "which tried to graft the loose vigor of

⁵⁴ Ibid., 13.

Henley on the tight moralizing of Tennyson; I borrowed Chesterton's unorthodox idiom, his paradoxology, to prove uncontested truisms"⁵⁵ Apparently a more typical account of the Masses' versifying and its origin occurred in the first issue. The editor wrote: "When Herbert Everett, who used to be editor of Van Norden's Magazine, and then had to be something else, because they didn't want any Socialists fooling around a perfectly good publication -- well, when Mr. Everett saw Cesare's picture of 'The Masses,' he went off and looked out of the window a few minutes. When he came back, he said: 'I could make a poem out of that.' So he did."⁵⁶ In Tennysonian metre and form, the "poem" jogged through four stanzas to a revolutionary conclusion to the effect that "We are many, they are one."⁵⁷ Such inspirational verse, looking backward for its technique and language, held little or no promise.

In fiction, the result was better and the promise greater. Vlag, without the literary theory and background of Seltzer, accepted a similar view as to the truth to be expected from fiction. Writing just before he became officially the editor, he took pains to reject crude revolutionary propaganda written to convince "the readers of THE MASSES that they will get together some evening, march to Washington, shoot the Plutes and establish the Co-operative Commonwealth."⁵⁸ Vlag took a firm stand for cold truth or no magazine at all, but more significantly, he

⁵⁵ Untermeyer, From Another World, 39.

⁵⁶ I, 11 (January, 1911).

⁵⁷ Ibid., 4.

⁵⁸ I, 8 (December, 1911).

took thoroughly American instances to make his point:⁵⁹

If ever there was a time (which we may doubt) when it was necessary to arouse the working-classes by Desperate Desmond stories with the capitalist playing the part of the villain with black mustache, that time is past. It may thrill the hay-seeds in Noodleville and make them goggle-eyed with interest to tell them of subterranean passages from the Capital in Washington through which palpitating plutocrats expect to make their get-away when the victorious and vengeful tramp of the hosts of the R-r-revolution shall be heard, but it can only disgust and repel the sensible and sane. Socialists in head as well as in heart, those whose intelligence is stirred as well as their emotions, are disgusted. The men whose commonsense we shall need almost immediately to organize the Co-operative Commonwealth are just the ones we lose by this frantic effort to get votes.

Political rather than literary in his judgments, Vlag's desire for commonsense realism helped young American writers who wished to write realistically to an appearance in print.

During the years 1911-12, there was very little direct propaganda for socialism in the stories in the Masses, and the subject matter ranged from the inter-racial problem at Radcliffe to a steel worker's death. Inez Haynes Gillmore was the most regular contributor to the magazine, maintaining a generally high level of excellence which just missed unified success. George Allen England, Horatio Winslow, M. B. Levick, Mary Heaton Vorse, Charlotte Teller, Florence Kiper and others contributed stories which dealt realistically with urban and industrial subject-matter. Although the stories in general failed through sentimentality or melodrama or too much imitation of the tricks of O. Henry, and with one or two exceptions never touched the bounds of "proletarian" fiction, they did reflect the American scene and the new problems of the time. It was

59 Ibid., 8.

obvious that there was a great deal of available and unpublished talent as well as a whole field of subject-matter toward which writers were groping. The need for the magazine was more apparent than its success; however, a thoroughly native literary revolt was gaining momentum as the Masses showed.

The artists, too, had an outlet in the Masses. The magazine had set out to "print cartoons and illustrations of the text by the best artists of the country This does not mean that the editor will not admit to the columns of the Masses new, unknown geniuses as soon as he discovers them."⁶⁰ Art Young, Boardman Robinson, Charles A. Winter, H. J. Turner, Anton O. Fischer, Maurice Becker, Alexander Popini, Oscar Cesare and a few others, although with the possible exception of the first two scarcely near "genius," contributed drawings to the magazine. Drawings somewhat blurred by sentimentality and traditional techniques of illustration nonetheless showed a notable movement toward uncluttered realism, the use of the worker for a subject and a close cooperation between text and picture -- although the text was too often an over-elaborate explanation of a self-explanatory drawing.

The most consistently effective work, some of it very good indeed, was contributed by Art Young, who was a moving spirit both of the early and later Masses. When he could generalize an entire attitude or point of view, free from the magazine's dogma, Young was at his best. One of his most famous cartoons appeared in 1911. The drawing of two small children standing in a dirty city street looking up at the unfamiliar stars was captioned "Observation de Luxe -- Young Poet: Gee Annie,

⁶⁰ I, 3 (January, 1911).

look at the stars! They're thick as bedbugs."⁶¹ The combination of poignant sentiment with ruthless attack on things as they are for the children of men could scarcely have been bettered. An elaborate development of the parasite theme in the accompanying text did nothing to help the suggestive force of the drawing. Social satire with the widest possible framework of ideas was the genius of Art Young, as it would be the mark of the reorganized Masses. What other men could do with satiric realism, given a chance to print their pictures, remained to be seen after 1912; but the promise, already more effective than the fiction, was clear by the time Vlag's management ended.

Like all "little" magazines, the Masses had difficulty from the beginning in keeping alive. At the six month mark, Vlag triumphantly claimed a circulation of 10,000. The kindly Debs contributed a supporting note to the issue of July, 1911. Beginning in 1912, the price was raised from five to ten cents and a better quality of paper was promised, but never appeared. An enlargement of the editorial staff in July, 1912 and the creation of a full-fledged board of directors demonstrated the support the magazine could have, but provided no significant financial help.⁶² From the contents, it was impossible to tell that the magazine was in serious trouble even in the final issue of August, 1912. But

61 I, 12 (October, 1911).

62 In addition to Vlag as editor, the new staff included Charles A. Winter as Art Editor, Inez Haynes Gillmore as Fiction Editor and Horatio Winslow and Louis Untermeyer as Assistant Editors. Robert Carlton Brown said that the intellectuals took the magazine away from Vlag. Although this is not supported by the evidence of Young and Untermeyer, there is no doubt that this editorial shift marked the movement toward the wider and freer artistic and social revolt typical of the time.

Rufus Weeks withdrew his subsidy, and the end came as Art Young recorded:⁶³

For a year and a half the Masses appeared regularly, but did not become anywhere near being self-supporting, and Mr. Weeks' enthusiasm waned and finally came to a full stop. Vlag's co-operative stores were suffering from too much individualism, and he had lost his usual buoyancy. But he was busy trying to solve the problem of survival for "the Masses," and he went to Chicago to look up a man reputed to have a lot of money and a generous nature. That man had just left for a trip around the world

So the magazine was apparently dead in September, and Vlag vanished from the scene. According to Eastman, he "had moved to the warmer climate of Tampa, Florida."⁶⁴

As American radicalism emerged from the old, predominantly European socialism, so a new magazine emerged from the ordinary and inept cooperative and socialist periodical. The artists led the way, but the Masses was to become the brightest expression of all major aspects of the radical renaissance. It was in December, 1912 that the real magazine known as the Masses began. From the gray ashes of a fire which had never done much more than sputter emerged a flame which showered sparks.

63 Young, Life and Times, 274.

64 Eastman, Enjoyment of Living, 394.

CHAPTER II

SHAPING A MAGAZINE -- REVOLUTION VERSUS REFORM

When the Masses was reborn in December, 1912, it immediately became the voice of revolutionary radicalism demanding the complete overturn of American society in contrast to the patchwork reform which its editors attributed to the dominant political and social forces in the United States. Unlike the program of the Socialist Party, the revolutionary policy of the magazine was freed from dogmatic narrowness to approach American problems instrumentally -- as they existed in reality rather than in theory. Furthermore, social and aesthetic problems were included apart from their purely political significance. Although the Socialist Party was to be a major instrument in reconstituting society, the destructive analysis of American institutions preparatory to revolution included the Socialists whenever they seemed to be ineffective or parochial. Brashly, and without fear or favor, the magazine chose for its enemies all opponents of human liberty and truth.

To make effective so generous an attack in the name of truth, the magazine had to draw to itself a brilliant, eclectic staff with exceptional satiric power. It was necessary to organize the staff in such a way as to stimulate the freest possible expression from rebellious individuals; and it was necessary to confine this freedom within a general pattern of attack on the social order. This was the almost impossible task which the Masses attempted. The result was a periodical filled with individual and social vitality to an extraordinary degree, especially marked in the intimate and successful relationship between social revolution and the creative arts.

The strongest impulse to continue the magazine after its failure under Vlag came from a group of artists and writers. They were active socialists, but their action depended largely on having a vehicle to print their work. Vlag's visit to Chicago in search of funds led him to merge the Masses with a socialist woman's magazine in the mid-west, throwing in the New York artists and writers as a part of the bargain. Naturally enough, this idea was rejected with some violence when Vlag returned to New York to tell the staff.

A meeting was held in August, 1912 by the writers Untermeyer and Eugene Wood and the artists Young, John and Dolly Sloan, Alice and Charles Winter, H. S. Turner, Maurice Becker, Glenn Coleman and William Washburn Nutting. The group decided to keep publishing the magazine without any money -- "something nobody but artists would think of doing."¹ Many of them were familiar with such European publications as the German Simplissimus and Jugend and the French Gil Blas, in which the satire was pointed and keen, the literature (notably in Gil Blas, which reprinted Mallarme, Baudelaire, de Maupassant, Prevost, Daudet, Bourget, Zola and others) was excellent in quality, and the drawing of Steinlen (especially), E. Thony, Bruno Paul, Theodor Heine and Wilhelm Schulz followed and varied the great tradition of Daumier. These magazines, ruthlessly critical of all aspects of established society, were truly satirical rather than "class-conscious" propaganda organs. But both the excellence and the satiric force appealed to the Americans. They saw the possibility of a similar magazine in the United States to print their own excellent work and to express their socialist opposition to "the system" and all its parts.

1 Art Young, On My Way (New York, 1935), 275.

However impractical the artists were about financing the magazine, they did know that an editor was badly needed. (Young had met Max Eastman some months before at a dinner for Jack London. Although Eastman was teaching at Columbia University, he was at the point of resigning to devote himself to writing and socialism. "A part-time editorial job on some socialist paper, a column of labor news or comments -- these were the projects I had in mind," he wrote.² He wanted to support himself and at the same time make some contribution toward teaching the radicals to think scientifically and experimentally. "And I was also modest enough to believe," he added, "I could teach them this wisdom on the side, or that we could learn it together while I was devoting my morning hours to creative writing on other subjects."³

The Masses group was impressed by an Eastman article on the founding of the Men's League for Woman Suffrage. Sloan and Untermeyer composed a note which everyone signed. "Dear Eastman," it read, "We have just elected you editor of The Masses at no salary per annum."⁴ However far this was from what he wanted, Eastman was persuaded to try the job for a few issues. When he discovered a real talent for the scissors and paste-pot of magazine make-up and also the charm and intellectual stimulus of an exciting and talented group of people and the absolute need the magazine had for someone to keep it alive, he was lost in editorial responsibilities for something like ten years. A small salary was ultimately

2 Eastman, Enjoyment of Living, 389

3 Loc. cit.

4 Untermeyer, From Another World, 42.

forthcoming, but Eastman's major energies went to the magazine rather than to his personal writing of poetry and criticism. He was dragooned into the job; and as Young observed the miracle, "In three months we emerged, December, 1912, with new hope and a new make-up throughout, with color on the cover."⁵

Raising funds to keep the publication alive -- the problem which had ended Vlag's editorship -- was almost entirely Eastman's responsibility from the beginning. Unlike many struggling little magazines, there were no pleas in each issue for financial help through direct contributions, although there was of necessity a continuous barrage of promotion directed toward increasing the subscription list. A favorite technique was to reprint letters to the editor alternating high praise with indignant insult, thus appealing both to a desire for excellence and for rebellion in the prospective subscriber. Some income resulted from advertising, although the chief advertisers were always publishers with offers of books or magazines. In June of 1916, for example, appeared advertisements for bronze medallions of famous men offered by the Masses, for Oliver typewriters, Montessori apparatus and Tuxedo Tobacco. All other advertisements were from publishers, including Doubleday, Page, Henry Holt and Company, Frederick A. Stokes, Charles Scribner's Sons, E. B. Huebsch and the Washington Square Book Shop.

The Masses Book Store was featured as a department in the magazine beginning with the issue of February, 1915. Selected books were offered with brief notes on the contents. Prices were the same or lower than the publisher's price, yet the Masses still made a small commission

5 Young, On My Way, 276.

on sales. "No one is trying to make money out of the Masses, but we do want its receipts to pay the cost of publishing. Radical efforts do not pay in dollars," said the editor.⁶ The Book Store grew in size and importance, offering lists of books in the fields of fiction, science and art, history, education, poetry and drama, sociology, health, sexology and "general." The selections were perceptive and presented a wide choice of European and American books.

Such fund-raising efforts supplemented the sales receipts from the magazine. Circulation figures are not obtainable, and estimates from those concerned vary, but the average distribution was apparently between ten and twenty thousand a month through single-copy subscriptions, bundles ordered by socialist and labor groups and newsstand sales in New York and elsewhere.⁷ In any case, the magazine was continually on the verge of suspension and managed to exist only because Eastman utilized a talent for raising funds as well as pasting up the dummy. The methods of raising the twelve to fifteen thousand dollars needed yearly were such as would be possible only in a time when social ferment had stirred all classes, including the wealthy. To obtain the first contribution, Inez Milholland, a suffragette friend, arranged for Eastman an introduction to Mrs. O. H. P. Belmont, whose only possible connection with radicalism was a devotion to

6 VI, 3 (February, 1915). The new management returned to the yearly volume of twelve issues.

7 So far as can be determined, no business records of the Masses survive. The recollection of Eastman, Dell and Sloan indicates a moderate estimate. Merrill Rogers, the last business manager, believed that circulation during 1917 went as high as seventy thousand, but this figure differs radically from Eastman's memory of the same period. A peak of thirty thousand seems possible, but was unquestionably not typical of the five years of the magazine's publication. E. E. Wonderly of the McConnell Printing Company testified in 1918 that the circulation of the Masses for August, September and October of 1917 was 25,000, 20,000 and 28,000 respectively. See the New York Times, 8:5 (April 17, 1918) for these surviving figures.

militant woman suffrage. She also furnished John Fox, Jr. to give literary respectability to Eastman's request for funds. Mrs. Belmont gave two thousand dollars; Fox was seduced by the situation into adding another thousand.⁸ Eastman later wrote: "Thus our super-revolutionary magazine owed its send-off to a leader of New York's 400 -- to the fortune of old Public-be-Damned Vanderbilt, in fact, -- and to a southern gentleman with as much interest in proletarian revolution as I had in polo ponies."⁹

Funds came from such diverse sources as Berkeley Tobey, who succeeded Dolly Sloan as business manager and turned over his inherited fortune of \$2,060 intact to the magazine, Amos Pinchot, Elizabeth Sage Hare, Samuel Untermyer, Adolph Lewisohn, E. W. Scripps and his sister, Mrs. Kate Crane Gartz of the Chicago Cranes and Aline Barnsdall, who inherited the oil fortune. There was a steady trickle of small contributions of fifty cents and up from the rank and file of labor and radicalism; however, despite this solid if inadequate base, the Masses was in truth "a luxurious gift to the working-class movement from the most imaginative artists, the most imaginative writers, and the most imaginative millionaires in the Adolescence of the Twentieth Century."¹⁰

A succession of business managers which began with Dolly Sloan and ended with Merrill Rogers, who came directly to the Masses from Harvard College, took care of the subscription lists, the mailing, such accounts as were kept, and managed the Book Store, which had an actual

8 See "My Career in High Finance," Chapter 55 of Eastman, The Enjoyment of Living.

9 Ibid., 404.

10 Ibid., 463.

physical existence as well as being a department in the magazine. They were all somewhat shadowy, if indispensable, figures except as they contributed with others to the magazine.

Although the financing of the Masses was extraordinary, and in its breadth, an indication of the time, the ownership and operation had much more meaning in accounting for the magazine's peculiar brilliance. In theory, the magazine was both cooperatively owned and operated by its contributing editors. The notarized statements of ownership which were printed in compliance with the law showed the ownership to have been genuinely cooperative, the cited stockholders of the Masses Publishing Company being identical in all but one or two instances with a list of the most active editors.¹¹

Not only was the ownership cooperative, so was an important part of the editing. The Masses' meetings were the sustaining heart of the publication. (In operation, the choice of contents was made for each issue at one or two monthly meetings of the staff. Each picture or piece of writing was submitted for group judgment and ultimate vote.) These meetings were, of course, by no means completely amicable and calm. Most of the editors attended, along with invited (or uninvited) guests and friends such as labor leaders like Anton Johansson and Bill Haywood, agitators like Elizabeth Gurley Flynn and Carlo Tresca, the lawyer, Clarence Darrow, or the visiting poet, Carl Sandburg. All of them joined in the arguments over contributions.

Mary Heaton Vorse wrote: "There would arise from the clamor and strife of those meetings something vigorous and creative of which we were

¹¹ See for example VIII, 27 (December, 1915).

all a part. The flame was present here too, as well as in Lawrence.¹²

She has given a description of typical meetings:¹³

The artists were more vital and more powerful than the writers, including as they did, John Sloan, Boardman Robinson, Robert Minor, Bellows, Coleman, Stuart Davis, and Cornelia Barnes, while in comparison we seemed puny and lacking in force. The cartoons would be submitted to the meeting as a whole, and noisily voted on.

The next Masses meeting would be an ordeal for the writers. Floyd Dell would read the contribution aloud without telling the author's name. It might be the work of an outsider, or it might come from one of the editors. As Floyd read along, Sloan would give a groan. Boardman Robinson would look bored behind his red beard. A voice would say, "Oh, my God, Max, do we have to listen to this tripe?"

Voices would clamor "Cut it out!" Floyd would go on, and any reading of so many manuscripts aloud would have been monotonous. The poor author would feel more and more like a worm. You could see him looking wildly around to see if there was any means of a swift exit.

Nothing more horrible can be imagined than having one's piece torn to bits by the artists at a Masses meeting. On the other hand, there was no greater reward than having them stop their groans and catcalls and give close attention; then laughter if the piece was funny, finally applause.

The cooperative experiment, for all that it would probably end either through inertia or a grand explosion, was a great success in reconciling the conflicting aims and ideas of a large group of greatly talented

12 Mary Heaton Vorse, A Footnote to Folly (New York, 1935), 42. Lawrence refers to the great mill strike of 1911 at which Mrs. Vorse began a lifetime devotion to the cause of labor. The comparison of the meetings to striking workers was apt. See Chapter III.

13 Ibid., 42-3. Floyd Dell says that Mrs. Vorse probably had in mind an occasion for which he never knew how to apologize, when she came late in the middle of the reading of one of her stories which was a bit too long. To force attention, Dell was reading louder in increasing desperation; he may have sounded as if he were "hamming" the story -- unintentionally. There was a coolness for a time between the two writers.

and individualistic artists. No one was paid. The honor of passing their colleagues' judgment was the only incentive other than the artistic satisfaction of seeing a work in print. They were actually "A little republic in which, as artists, we worked for the approval of our fellows, not for money."¹⁴ There was little or none of "the continuous arrogance of the editorial attitude, not only in matters of opinion and taste but in property rights,"¹⁵ which Algernon Tassin observed in chronicling the history of American magazines of the nineteenth century. If sparks flew on the Masses, it was in part because the organization was unique -- because the ever-present stimulus of the group made exciting demands on the individuals.

The meetings continued throughout the career of the Masses, but were of less importance beginning some time in 1916. Accounts given by others, including Eastman, Dell, Young and Untermeyer, agree in substance with Mary Heaton Vorse. This part of the selection of material was without doubt cooperative and resulted in as high a standard as the work submitted allowed.

The fact of group editorship did not alone account for success. Another fundamental reason for the magazine's strength was the exceptionally high quality of the staff of editors. Eastman was unquestionably the cultural leader of the left at the time, possessed of rare abilities both as speaker and writer. He combined the keen logical objectivity of the scientific philosopher and the sensitive awareness of the poet with the humor and persuasiveness to make them effective. He was, perhaps, an

¹⁴ Dell, Homecoming, 251.

¹⁵ Algernon Tassin, The Magazine in America (New York, 1916), 326.

excellent example of Emerson's "American Scholar," drawing deeply on nature, books and actual life experience to become "Man Thinking."

Dell, who joined the magazine in January, 1914, was, in Eastman's words, "the most perfect example of an associate editor that nature's evolution has produced I never knew a more reasonable or dependable person, more variously intelligent, more agile in combining sociability with industry, and I never knew a writer who had his talents in such complete command."¹⁶ Dell could sit down at the last minute at the printer's and write whatever was needed to fill a blank space. He was also, as Eastman fully credited, one of the most widely read and perceptive reviewers of the time. For the magazine he wrote poetry, stories, articles and reviews and also supervised publication. He also shared with the editor the responsibility of cajoling work of high quality from reluctant artists and writers when, as was often the case, there was not enough first-rate material coming in.

John Reed, who joined the magazine in March, 1913 and even briefly tried the job of managing editor during the latter part of that year, was one of the great reporters of his time both for the Metropolitan Magazine and the Masses. The latter got much of his finest work on Mexico and the war in Europe. When he had time, Reed wrote some fine stories and promising poetry.¹⁷ Louis Untermeyer, who was already well established as a

16 Eastman, Enjoyment of Living, 443.

17 See Granville Hicks, John Reed (New York, 1936). This very good biography is somewhat weak on Reed's relation to the Masses for reasons chronicled in an interchange of letters in the Modern Monthly, X, 8, 19-22, 31 (October, 1936), Ibid., X, 29-31 (December, 1936); and Ibid., X, 15-16 (May, 1937). It seems, without attempting to adjudicate a dispute with such complex political and psychological roots, that the interaction of Reed and the Masses was somewhat more significant to both than the biography suggests.

poet and critic of poetry, exercised for the Masses both of these abilities as well as a fine talent for satire and humor at the meetings. Mary Heaton Vorse was beginning her long and active career as a labor journalist and short story writer. Howard Brubaker developed his famous paragraphs for the Masses and never missed an issue. William English Walling, socialist dialectician and, despite his more than adequate income, a revolutionary who had fought on the barricades in the Russian revolution of 1905 and been the heart of the famous "A" club which had offered shelter to Maxim Gorki in 1906, contributed a department dealing especially with European Socialism called "The World-Wide Battle Line." Eugene Wood remained on the staff until May of 1915; and at various times Robert Carlton Brown, Arthur Bullard, author of the early proletarian novel Comrade Yetta, Edmond McKenna, Helen Marot, a pioneer labor historian, Charles W. Wood and Arturo Giovannitti, I. W. W. organizer and poet, were added to the list of contributing editors for literature.

John Sloan, painter, graphic artist, almost as eloquent with words as in line, acted as art editor until he resigned from the staff in June, 1916. In the first year especially, he often shared Eastman's tasks as editor. Art Young strengthened almost every issue with some of his finest work. Stuart Davis, who was to become a major figure in American modernism, joined the staff in July, 1913, to contribute a series of fine pictures and an occasional smashing cartoon. (Charles A. and Alice Beach Winter remained with the magazine until June of 1916 although the neo-classical style of the former and the sentimentalism of the latter were not well suited to the new magazine. Maurice Becker, except for a brief interval, continued to draw for the Masses throughout its career, his work growing steadily more effective and as reliable as that of Art Young.

George Bellows became a contributing editor in June, 1913 and gave the Masses some of his best work. Cornelia Barnes, a month later, began her drawing of callow and arrogant young men which anticipated John Held's documentation of the youth of the twenties. H. J. Turner, Glenn O. Coleman, K. R. Chamberlain, H. J. Glintenkamp and G. S. Sparks were editors for varying lengths of time. In June, 1916 when several editors left the magazine, John Barber, Robert Minor and Boardman Robinson joined the staff to keep the artists in full and powerful representation.

Other artists, writers and left-wing figures attended many of the meetings and shared in producing the magazine. Mabel Dodge, whose salon was at its height in these years of the Masses, came to the meetings and considered herself one of the "advisory committee." She summed up the vital spirit of the group and of the time: "The most that anyone knew was that the old ways were about over, and the new ways all to create. The city was teeming with potentialities."¹⁸ Many of these potentialities focussed around the Masses' meetings, contributing to an exceptional publication. The artist had been a lonely man in American society. Here, for once, he sharpened his mind and will and creative spirit against the best of his fellows. American life was in rebellion and the Masses' editors belonged in the life of their time.

18 Mabel Dodge Luhan, Movers and Shakers (New York, 1936), 151. A letter from Max Eastman appeared in the book: "Will you take over April or May number of The Masses magazine? Fill all space you can with plays, stories, editorials, verse, articles, suggest cartoons, anything you choose. Unconditioned freedom of expression. Will advertise you as editor of the issue. Probably circulation 2 or 3 hundred thousand from Atlantic to Pacific Coast. All profits yours." (p. 154). Nothing of this sort was done at any time, and the figures are indeed extreme. But Mabel Dodge did contribute, in part anonymously.

A full emphasis on the cooperative nature of the Masses must allow for the inevitably dominant position of the editor and managing editor. Eastman had a free hand with his editorial material subject to the ultimate judgment of his colleagues, and the exigencies of publication resulted in an actual dominance of Eastman over the contents as well as the finances -- with the later assistance of Floyd Dell. In a sense, the editor's control was absolute. Not everything submitted or included could be discussed and read in open meeting; there was simply not time. Make-up demanded that all of the space be filled without an interval to call other meetings. Inevitably there was much of the editor and managing editor in the final issues even if the major features were decided cooperatively. Dell often used his own judgment, especially as to brief fillers and poems, and there were times when he was over-ridden by Eastman. But this was an essential part of producing each demanding issue, even if it was a kind of latent dictatorship; and as Dell wrote: "Once the artists rebelled and took the magazine away from us; but, as they did nothing toward getting out the next issue, Max and I got some proxies from absentee stockholders and took the magazine back."¹⁹ Dell's final judgment as to the practical success of the magazine, including its subsidies, was that it was "due chiefly to Max Eastman's tact and eloquence; he could talk anybody into doing anything."²⁰

19 Dell, Homecoming, 251. For the artist's revolt see Chapter VI.

20 Ibid., 252. Always a controversial figure, the brilliant and charming editor evoked strong opinions from all sides. This study makes no attempt to solve the fascinating and bewildering question of Max Eastman. His colleagues who have remained communists have, of course, condemned him, as have such fighting anarchists as Emma Goldman and such intellectual anarchists as Hutchins Hapgood. Liberals have feared his revolutionary background. His unusually frank autobiography is indispensable for an understanding of the man.

With funds available and an extraordinary group of editors, there remained to be stated the general position of the magazine and its relationship to the complex political problems of the day, especially confused on the turbulent left. In the first issue of the revived magazine, Eastman set his sights for truly free expression of the finest quality of criticism available in the radical minds of America. To the definite statement that the periodical was generally socialist was added the qualification which distinguished the Masses from other magazines of protest: "Observe that we do not enter the field of any Socialist or other magazine now published, or to be published. We shall have no further part in the factional disputes within the Socialist Party; we are opposed to the dogmatic spirit which creates and sustains these disputes. Our appeal will be to the masses, both Socialist and non-Socialist, with entertainment, education, and the livelier kinds of propaganda."²¹ In June of 1915, Art Young illustrated the anti-dogmatic position with the tiny figure of a cherub carrying a small pail whose watery contents was marked "dogma" against the towering background of an ocean wave marked "truth."

John Reed brought in a statement he had written as to what he thought the magazine should stand for. With careful revision by Eastman, it became the challenge printed on either page two or three of every issue after January, 1913:²²

This Magazine is Owned and Published Cooperatively by its Editors. It has no Dividends to Pay, and nobody is trying to make Money out of it. A Revolutionary and not a Reform magazine; a Magazine with a Sense of Humor and no Respect for the Respectable; Frank; Arrogant; Impertinent; Searching for the True Causes; a Magazine Directed against Rigidity and Dogma

²¹ IV, 3 (December, 1912).

wherever it is found; Printing what is too Naked or True for a Money-Making Press; a Magazine whose final Policy is to do as it Pleases and Conciliate Nobody, not even its Readers -- A Free Magazine.

If the Masses declared itself against dogmatic strife, it nonetheless had a thoroughly positive approach to the social system. The end in view, although not necessarily to be obtained solely by violence, was revolution: "a sweeping change accomplished through the conquest of power by a subjected class." The opposite of revolution, said Eastman, was not evolution, in which everyone believed because it was inevitable, but reaction. "The reformer," he summarized, "wishes to procure for the workers their share of the blessings of civilization; he believes in himself and his altruistic oratory; he tries to multiply his kind. The revolutionist wishes the workers to take the blessings of civilization; he believes in them, and their organized power; he tries to increase in them the knowledge of their situation and the spirit of class-conscious aggression."²³

Distinguishing between reform and revolution on the basis of a firm yet free attachment to Marxism as economic science, based on the assumption that all men struggle most for their own economic interest when they know what it is, continued to be, throughout the career of the magazine, a center of policy. By choosing the worker's side, the Masses

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- 22 The somewhat romantic and adolescent challenge of parts of the editorial statement have been a source of considerable argument. A reading of the magazine indicates that Art Young's memory was wrong in attributing the statement mainly to Reed, although the less serious and more superficially daring parts are probably his. They fit with the stories, poems and reporting of his early years before he became a more serious revolutionary. Eastman's description of the statement and its origin seems accurate (see note 19).
- 23 IV, 5 (December, 1912).

accepted constant battle in the name of justice. "They will call you materialistic, incendiary, enemies of Christianity and democratic brotherhood," wrote Eastman. "As long as the power remains in their hands they will suppress you, they will bring charges against you, they will throw you into state prisons in the name of 'Social Consciousness.'" Since this was true, "either we will see a Social Revolution, or we will never see liberty and equality established on the earth."²⁴

Compromise, in a struggle for power, seemed impossible, and the Masses attacked reform, however sincere, as a smoke-screen for injustice. That there were possible short-term gains through the work of reformers was frankly admitted, but since capital's objective was "benevolent efficiency," labor could never get ahead. Apparent gains should be accepted, "but do not fool yourself into thinking that this kind of an arrangement is ever an essential victory against capital or a fundamental step in the direction of human justice."²⁵ The editor claimed that until labor took control, capital would always manage to make a large gain every time labor made a small one.

To bring about the dominance of labor, the magazine needed to find a practical approach to the American reluctance to swallow rigid "foreign" doctrine whole. The reformist and unrevolutionary temper of the American public did not lead the Masses to hopeless defiance, and Marxism was not applied to American society as a dogmatic gospel. The general Marxian view of the class structure of society was taken as a hypothesis and then applied specifically to American social structure.

²⁴ IV, 5 (April, 1913).

²⁵ Ibid., 5.

Eastman accepted as the simple truth the fact that the middle class in the United States was the largest and might remain so; he claimed it did not even need to be abolished. If as he thought, the middle class had no strong economic feelings or interests, a clear distinction between a small group of capitalists on one side and a much larger group of proletarians on the other would force the middle to take sides. "Every battle line passes through the center of the souls of thousands of people, but when the battle rages, these people have to take their stand upon one side or the other. In this fact lies the promise of the social revolution."²⁶ All that was needed was to be sure the line between was truly drawn, and this was the task of a real social science -- a science basic to the magazine's efforts. A further squeeze of labor by the invention of a new coal-mining machine could help to make proletarians conscious; the high cost of living which squeezed the middle class could lead to a discontent which would move the quantitative strength to the proletarian side. The task of the Masses was to define the battle-line on all possible issues for both proletarians and the middle class.

Although the magazine never formulated a specific "policy," there were definite principles which gave unified meaning to diverse materials. These were most completely stated when, in June, 1916, The New Review, an intellectual Socialist journal, was absorbed by the Masses and printed as a separate section under the title "The Masses Review."²⁷ Here, given the opportunity, Eastman began to define his scientific basis for the

26 Ibid., 5.

27 It was with the addition of the "Review" that the size of the magazine doubled to forty-eight pages, and in August, 1916, the price went up a nickel to fifteen cents or a dollar and a half a year.

editorials under the general title "Towards Liberty: The Method of Progress." The first section traced the development of the scientific method as a devotion to "the enunciation and testing out of working hypotheses." Applying the criteria of this method to the work of Karl Marx, it seemed clear that, although Marx had succeeded in introducing the concepts of science into economics, in replacing the static absolutes of classical economics with evolutionary prediction, he had fallen a victim "to the intellectualistic philosophy of a previous century in Europe." His passionate wish led Marx to rationalize, despite the practicality which was the foundation of his revolutionary theory. The need of revolutionaries in 1916 was summed up briefly:²⁸

As it stands, however, we must alter and remodel what he [Marx] wrote, and make of it, and of what else our recent science offers, a doctrine that shall clearly have the nature of hypothesis, of method for proceeding towards our end. A technique of progress, offering a working guide, both tentative, indeed, and highly general, but not vague, to those who wish for human liberty — that is what today demands. And there are many minds today who possess such a technique, though it never has been clearly formulated, and the difference between these minds and the rigid Marxist or the emotional revolutionary has no public name.

The major elements of serious revolutionary analysis were clear. The Masses, in its editorials, stood for Marx, yes; but even more it reflected the essentially practical and down-to-earth scientific realities of pragmatism and instrumentalism. The magazine, unlike the earlier De Leon or the later Communists, was in the main stream of American thought — plus Marx.

The beginning of the second section of the article was clearly in

28 VIII, 28 (September, 1916), 29.

line with John Dewey's thought: "The act of thinking in completeness is a movement back and forth between the factual situation and the end desired, each being comprehended and continually redefined in its relation to the other, and the hypothesis progressively remodeled as the change proceeds."²⁹ With this logic as a basis, the working hypothesis to be considered had then to be examined as to aim ("for I assume that the stimulus of vague dissatisfaction with our present social state is general"), the facts about human nature in society, and finally the general plan of action.

In setting up a plan, the revolutionist must especially beware the tendency to create a new philosophy of life, a temptation which would come to every intellectual poet as it came to Christ, to Tolstoy, to Emerson or to Nietzsche. "He [the poet] has imagination, he has mood, he has suppressed desires. He can so easily see the world under a form that will exalt that imagination, eternalize the mood, and satisfy the unsatisfied that life's reality has left in him. But this he can no longer do, and call it general truth. All individual poetry of experience must be called poetry, or it will be called quackery."³⁰

As dangerous as the poet's Utopia was the complete prospectus of the social planner in a dynamic world of science. Eastman wrote: "And a man's social philosophy is not the plan of some elaborated commonwealth that he lays out in his mind; it is the act of aligning himself with a social force, and his factual and ideal reasons therefor."³¹ There was

29 Ibid., 29.

30 Ibid., 29. For Eastman's analysis of the relationship of poetry and science, see The Enjoyment of Poetry (New York, 1921).

31 Ibid., 29.

no need for elaborate plans even of the immediate future because plans would follow power. , "Indeed he [the revolutionary] needs all that he has for the more delicate task of maintaining his alignment in the complexity of current change, and for fashioning the next steps and ever the next as he proceeds. Time will be more creative than our imaginations can be."³² The necessary planning was simply the shifting requirement to control current change.

Such a policy was as "opportunistic" as Dewey's analysis of the nature of society. It also shared the knowledge of the actual technique of revolution which was so thoroughly mastered by Lenin.³³ It was completely optimistic, concerned only in the most general sense with ethical ends, but certain that the means of today would work towards those ends. Significantly enough, however, there was a complete break with the metaphysical and mystical concept of history which had dominated the optimism of Karl Marx. This was revolution through the hard, shrewd practicality of American philosophy rather than the vague and ultimately absolutist doctrine of Hegel.

In a later article, Eastman measured contemporary movements for social betterment against his concept of scientific revolution and found them wanting. The article, which was entitled "The Aim of Agitation," appeared in October, 1916. Utopian catch-words were discussed in turn -- Equality, Brotherhood, Social Consciousness, Righteousness, Anarchy and Syndicalism. Each in turn was rejected either for its violation of the

32 Ibid., 29

33 This was notably clear in John Reed's account of the Russian November revolution in Ten Days that Shook the World (New York, 1919).

facts of human nature or for its inadequacy as a palliative only. If such men as Plato, Jesus, Tom Paine and Rousseau "wanted all men to have equal opportunity for the realization of life," they preached Equality only as a protest against caste, impossible of attainment without an absolute judge. Universal Brotherhood was a concept borrowed from Eastern philosophy and existed only as a mystic identity with an external absolute or in the comfortable and quieting self-justification of the well-to-do. Social Consciousness was both negative and obviously designed to allay discontent; although its aim to abolish absolute poverty was possible, it was degrading and could never revolutionize or change the fundamental economic stratifications of society. Righteousness was at best missionary and at worst simply self-righteous, designed not to give the individual liberty of his own, but someone else's. So Eastman dismissed the rallying words.

Organized movements fared no better. Anarchy was an intellectual throw-back to the cult of "natural liberty," dependent upon an absolute authority for enforcement, yet worshipping the notion of complete freedom from authoritative interference. Machine civilization had destroyed any possibility of the success of this eighteenth century doctrine. "From being a mere negation of external interference, the concept, individual liberty must become a sweeping and audacious affirmation. We must organize this intricate gigantic engine so that it produces liberty as well as wealth."³⁴

Syndicalism was equally foolhardy since it posited a powerful and

³⁴ VIII, 25 (October, 1916).

absolute central authority to maintain competition among essentially anarchic labor groups. If it recognized economics as a central control of man's behaviour, it failed to solve society's ills by choosing a single factor for explanation. As anarchism was purely political, so syndicalism was purely economic. Both ignored the nature of man, which was exceedingly complex despite the fundamental importance of economics.

With the unrealistic and inadequate goals of revolution discarded,³⁵ a positive aim remained to be stated:³⁶

The purpose of life is that it should be lived. It can be lived only by concrete individuals; and all concrete individuals are unique, and they have unique problems of conduct to solve. And though a million solutions must be generally proposed and praised in order that each may choose the true and wise one for himself, they are all futile, these solutions, and the whole proposal to live life in wisdom or virtue is hypocritical and absurd if men and women are not free to choose. That we should give to all the people on the earth a little liberty to be themselves, before we lay out such elaborate efforts to make them "better," seems to be a point of common courtesy that the entire idealistic trend of culture has ignored. Yet around that simple friendly purpose, dropped by the wayside in the grand procession, the revolutionary storms of history have always gathered.

The ultimate and general goal, despite economics and the class struggle, was to give all men a chance to live to the fullest with freedom of choice. This statement was completely in harmony with the often preached if seldom practiced doctrine at the root of American political idealism since "The Declaration of Independence." The Masses wished to extend political ideals into industrial democracy. There was, significantly, an

35 A qualification was included: "Something from all these utopias returns, after one has renounced them, and beautifies the enduring purpose of the agitator to make all men as free to live and realize the world as it is possible to make them." Ibid., 25.

36 Ibid., 25.

absolute condemnation of dictatorship as a violation of the natural rights of men and the evolutionary development of society.

Eastman did not finish this series of articles. The addition of a highly serious review displeased many subscribers, and the high cost of paper forced a reduction in the page size from $10\frac{1}{2} \times 13\frac{1}{2}$ to $8\frac{1}{2} \times 11$ and a change to inferior stock. Serious analysis shifted to the war in 1917. As a final note, however, the December, 1916 issue explained that despite the fears of Marxians and Syndicalists alike, the economic interpretation of history and the reality of the industrial struggle were not rejected in the aim of liberty. Eastman wrote: ". . . for both the conditions, and our knowledge of the conditions, of human bondage have changed. The substance of liberty must be defined anew."³⁷ This, in its own frank, arrogant and impertinent way, was the chief task of the Masses -- to join individual liberty to an understanding of an industrial society and to bring about a revolution from which would emerge new solutions for new problems.

For the five years from December, 1912 to December, 1917, the magazine attacked with the full force of realistic detail or satire the foolishness of reformers and dogmatists as well as misery, unhappiness and stupidity wherever they found them. So much underbrush of fixed ideas was to be rooted out that there was only a modicum of time and space to devote to the construction of revolution. Both Dell and Eastman were thoroughly aware that the United States was far from an actual revolution, hence they believed in the task of preparation through propaganda -- a task necessarily negative in that it had to reduce conventional

37 IX, 15 (December, 1916).

ideas to replace them with new and revolutionary concepts.

In a political democracy, the major pressures of social need express themselves, if often indirectly, in the manoeuvrings of party groups. Since the regular Republicans were far out of touch with realities in 1912 and the years following, the Masses turned its attention to the Progressives, the Democrats and of course the Socialists. Reformers were most often attacked, but there was an often repeated idea that the inadequacies of traditional politics were inevitably leading to new and social methods of government based on industrial democracy. The lack of an adequate realization of industrial realities by politicians or their rejection of liberty and democracy formed the basis for the Masses' attacks.

Immediately after the 1912 election, Eastman emphasized the twentieth century incongruity of the Democrats under Wilson. They were believers, said the editor, in a dead system, a restored free competition under the aegis of Jefferson. Democrats, he said, were of three kinds: those who voted a perennial straight ticket, small businessmen who were duped into believing competition could be restored in a modern industrial world, and big businessmen who knew that the Democrats would fail and wanted it that way for their own selfish interest. This heterogenous alliance evaded an answer to the problems of monopoly capitalism by promising patchwork reform.

The Progressives, as Eastman saw them, were much more dangerous opposition to the attainment of a revolutionized society because they were more fully aware of the real economic trends of the time, to which, however, they applied feudal and absolutist concepts. "The Progressive platform," he wrote, "---government control, with labor reform on the side --

is the next step in the evolution of Capitalism."³⁸ If this were true, the proposals of the Progressives, many of them adapted from the Socialist platform, represented no threat to ultimate revolution unless the Socialists got confused and began to think they were on the same side. As Eastman put it: "Essentially they represent the enlightened self-interest of capitalists. We represent the enlightened self-interest of the workers, and the fight goes on."³⁹ The Progressive Party was destined to be very good for socialism, said the Masses, in that it bade fair to draw the line between revolution and reform which would lead the middle class to choose sides.

After Wilson's inaugural address, Allan L. Benson, who was to run against Wilson in 1916, wrote for the Masses an article demonstrating a similar promise of definition by the new president. Despite Wilson's complete lack of understanding of economic realities, Benson thought he would clearly delineate the moral right and wrong in the social system, split the Democrats as the Republicans had been split by Roosevelt, and thus do business for socialism. Benson believed that Wilson was both intelligent and a fighter, although his blindness to economic actuality would mean that "except by way of clearing the ground for those who are to come after him, I have no hope that he will accomplish anything

38 IV, 6 (January, 1913). Many Socialists equated the Roosevelt progressivism with German State Socialism. German industrial progress revealed the success of benevolent, if absolute, autocracy. State Socialism did not have liberty as its aim, but the preservation of absolute control by an aristocracy or oligarchy. Clearly understood by the people, it would be rejected by Americans for the socialism which led to freedom and democracy -- so the Masses believed.

39 Ibid., 6.

else."⁴⁰

The Masses took little interest in Wilson's dramatic domestic program aside from occasional barbed comments in which the entire series of measures ~~was~~ recognized as falling directly within the classification of "reform." The editorial position did not need to be applied to each act. Since the attitude of Wilson toward established big business seemed negative, this was approved for the little it was worth. The Masses praised Wilson for his firm stand against intervention in Mexico in 1914, praised him for flouting Wall Street; but when the gunboats went to Vera Cruz, Young drew a biting cartoon of the president being given a back treatment by "Uncle Sam, Osteopath" with the comment: "There seems to be something lacking, Woodrow!"⁴¹ Eastman concluded that Wilson did not have the courage to go on with "watchful waiting," despite his attempts to comprehend a capitalist world. "I get the impression," Eastman wryly summarized, "that he is being slid around in a way rather unbecoming a scholar, by some powers that have got under his pedestal."⁴² This was to be expected, however, from a reformer who made no fundamental changes in the control of economic power.

Without knowing, of course, that Wilson's major social effort was over, the Masses recorded a shift of emphasis in 1914. In August and September, both Wilson and Roosevelt were accused of deserting the middle

⁴⁰ IV, 3 (May, 1913). The analysis agreed well with later writers who have stressed the Presbyterian rigidity of Wilson. As Benson indicated, the moral basis of the President's thought accounts as well for his successes as for his failures.

⁴¹ V, 17 (June, 1914).

⁴² Ibid., 18.

class to ally themselves with conservative wealth. Roosevelt, said Eastman, had wanted only a temporary resting place until economic unrest had quieted down, while the progressives had wanted his name. Aware chiefly of his ruling abilities, the "Colonel" had by this time decided to be an out-and-out leader of the Progressive Big Business sponsored by George Perkins. With Roosevelt, absolutism was natural; yet Wilson, too, had turned far to the right in his appointments to allay any suspicion of radicalism. "He doesn't want to lose his opportunity to exercise his remarkable political abilities in a dignified and secure position," said Eastman pointedly.⁴³

After the November 3, 1914 elections, Amos Pinchot, as one of its most active members, wrote a post-mortem of the defeated Progressive Party. The leadership of the party was clearly responsible for what happened, said Mr. Pinchot, since "a situation was developed where the rank and file and the more radical leaders found themselves working in a direction diametrically opposed to the dominating influence."⁴⁴ This influence was summed up in Theodore Roosevelt as much as in George Perkins. More fundamentally, the entire Progressive program was in error. "The

43 V, 18 (September, 1914). The degree of Wilson's opportunism is, of course, debatable. He performed some amazing political handsprings in the name of idealism and righteousness. See Matthew Josephson, The President-Makers (New York, 1940).

44 VI, 9 (December, 1914). Pinchot quoted a letter from Roosevelt: "I believe that the spirit, however honest, which prompts the assault upon Perkins, is the spirit which, if it becomes dominant in the party, means that from that moment it is an utter waste of time to expect any good from the party whatsoever, and that the party will at once sink, and deservedly sink, into an unimportant adjunct of the Debs movement or some other similar movement." Roosevelt's treatment of his followers in 1916 should not have so stunned his politically aware followers.

Progressive program had something of everything in it, from the care of babies to the building of a birch-bark canoe. Yet it contained little which dealt with the actual problems of the United States in any but the most superficial manner. It was the expression of social aspiration, but not of a social program."⁴⁵ Whereas the rank and file recognized economic necessities, the leadership was ensnared, with however much sincerity, in political delusions.

Wilson's weakening domestic program, which paralleled the decline of the Progressives, received little comment from the magazine after the flood of reform bills during his first two years in office had subsided. At the time of the strike at Ludlow, Colorado when Rockefeller refused to take any responsibility despite the request of the President, Maurice Becker drew a powerful and vicious caricature of the twisted figure and distorted, snarling face of a Wilson who had just been kicked in the seat of the pants by the mine owners;⁴⁶ but the President usually kept himself aloof and too magnificently rhetorical to be a good subject for the Masses' satire. A sketch of a newspaper conference with Wilson submitted by W. L. Stoddard revealed the journalist's view. "A man who might have talked through our hands and over the wires to the people, had nothing to say," he concluded, after due tribute to the President's skillful and ambiguous language. "That he said it eloquently was the greater pity. He had no vision to set before the country this morning."⁴⁷ For the Masses,

⁴⁵ VI, 9-10 (December, 1914). Note the use of the past tense by Pinchot in 1914, two years before the party really died.

⁴⁶ VI, 11 (November, 1914). The satiric caption was "The Conciliator."

⁴⁷ VI, 6 (January, 1915).

this was gentle, since they found no significant opponent in Wilson. The magazine approved the administration's reforms with complete lack of faith in their efficacy. In any case, the best of old-line politics could be dismissed as superficial. The Masses was "Searching for the True Causes."

Specific laws favoring labor or correcting abuses, such as the LaFollette Seamen's Act of 1915, were approved for what they accomplished. When the Adamson Act, which gave the eight-hour day to railway workers despite the refusal of both labor and management to arbitrate, was passed in 1916, the Masses responded with reserved enthusiasm to the method of gaining the eight-hour day. Becker had vividly sketched the attitude toward arbitration in 1913 with a cartoon showing two giant figures of labor and capital confronting each other on a bench with a shrinking and inadequate representative of the "public" sitting on the capitalist's knee like a ventriloquist's dummy.⁴⁸ The conventional arguments from principle that force settled nothing, that arbitration substituted reason for force and that a forcible struggle disregarded the public seemed completely false to Helen Marot, the labor historian, just as Becker had suggested two years earlier. A labor defeat, the usual result of arbitration, meant only that explosive action was replaced by the erosive force of starvation and misery. Reason, in any case, was rarely characteristic of arbitration boards and not transferable to the parties involved. The public could not really gain in the long run. "For those

48 V, 12-13 (October, 1913).

who recognize that violence and absence of sweet reasonableness is the characteristic of our industrial system," she wrote, "and that labor unions are efforts to bridge that gap, arbitration boards remain a device: good when they enforce the position of labor, and destructive when they add to the position of capital."⁴⁹ The Brotherhoods were completely right to refuse to arbitrate. This attack was typical of the Masses' attitude toward reforms and its consequent swing toward direct action.

In the same way, the eight-hour law, seen by Becker as torn from a bewildered and aghast Congress clinging to the roof of the capitol by a triumphant, sweeping figure of railway labor,⁵⁰ seemed to Helen Marot to show how the Brotherhoods had missed their opportunity to consolidate an aggressive organization including the unskilled because "there is idealism in the Brotherhoods which might have emanated from Brook Farm" -- a naive reliance on their own uprightness. Although they took their concession from Congress, they gave up collective bargaining for the "labyrinth of national politics." With a reliance on the law, the Supreme Court was accepted as the arbiter, and in that Court the only hope for labor was the perception of the danger that if justice to labor was not done, "we may have to face the wrath of good men."⁵¹ Becker adapted a cartoon from a famous drawing by Balfour Ker to show an anti-labor Supreme Court rocked back by a powerful fist thrust through the floor, but the Masses had no faith in labor's acceptance of political reformism in lieu of organized industrial power. To the magazine, politicians were subservient,

⁴⁹ IX, 14 (December, 1916).

⁵⁰ IX, 12-13 (November, 1916). The caption was a word -- "Power."

⁵¹ Ibid., 5.

weak vessels of entrenched class interests.

The Masses' final story of the Progressives was told by John Reed in 1916. He covered the Chicago convention and wrote a blistering attack on the Progressive leadership under the title "Roosevelt Sold Them Out." Tracing TR's connection with the spirit of militarism and the men who sponsored it and profited from it, Reed contrasted this record with the delegates, "men who all their lives had given battle against frightful odds to right the wrongs of the sixty per cent of the people of this country who own five per cent of its wealth."⁵² The driving evangelistic enthusiasm on the floor contrasted with the icy coldness of the leadership of George Perkins and his friends and the despair of the few leaders like Hiram Johnson who sensed what was happening. After the final stunning catastrophe of Roosevelt's refusal to run, the recovery of the delegates from shock was slow, although ultimately they realized that "their Messiah had sold them for thirty pieces of silver." Reed concluded that bad principles were not much worse than bad men, and "as for democracy, we can only hope that some day it will cease to put its trust in men." A new kind of social organization was once again the need learned from watching traditional politics.

Wilson's re-election was observed by Frank Bohn to mark the resumption of the main stream of American development after the dislocation following the Civil War. To him, the vital element had been a history of labor in which "the conflict between the farmer and the capitalist was the one main line of cleavage running through our politics."⁵³ As Bohn

⁵² VIII, 19 (August, 1916).

⁵³ IX, 15-16 (January, 1917).

saw the election, it marked the beginning of the emergence of a new political element -- the working class. Although Wilson's first election had been as a representative of the old, essentially conservative, agrarian interest, new problems had forced the President to become a true progressive moving with the new forces. "It was the old America," he suggested, "its mind just touched by the inspirations of the new time, which re-elected Wilson."⁵⁴

Bohn thought both foreign policy and domestic labor policy re-elected the President. In both cases, it seemed that Wilson's policies reflected the wishes of labor to some degree -- as it also mirrored the progressive ideas of the farmers of the South and West. Even so, the election was only a negative victory over Hughes, because Wilson had a good heart but no insight. "With his head uplifted and his happy smile illuminating the landscape he moves serenely down stream without the slightest notion of the wild rapids ahead," Bohn wrote. Unlike some of his predecessors, Wilson would not send federal troops to help shoot strikers, "but that is about all the labor movement can hope from Mr. Wilson."⁵⁵

When the Masses rejected the political programs of the two major parties and their progressive offspring, it seemed natural enough, since these groups were not economically revolutionary. A more surprising attack emerged from a distinctly unbrotherly attitude toward the excessively political comrades of the Socialist Party. As with the major political groups, the magazine wasted no time after its reorganization in both condemning and refusing participation in the particular concerns of the

⁵⁴ Ibid., 15

⁵⁵ Ibid., 16.

of the Socialist Party. The devotees of purely political activities for Socialists were immediately under attack. The magazine implied that the conventional political parties could not ultimately maintain their control; therefore, the question became one of tactics for the Socialists. With the correct methods, said the Masses, society could be revolutionized under Socialist leadership.

In January, 1913, the Masses printed a cartoon by Sloan entitled "Political Action," which was a direct result of the artist's experience as a Socialist watcher at a polling-place in the twelfth congressional district of New York. The picture showed a crowded room with one man pinned to the floor by a tough with a cigar in his mouth and another bent back over a railing by two other men. Both the watcher's certificate clutched in a waving hand and the brutal treatment received sly smirks or indifference from the crowd and a thoughtful chin-stroking from the one policeman visible.⁵⁶ Eastman's accompanying editorial was a blast at Socialist dogmatists who accepted either method, political or direct, as correct, and then attacked the one rejected: "All these questions of method are to be answered differently at different times, at different places, in different circumstances Therefore, the one thing continually important is that we keep our judgement free," he wrote. "Tie up to no dogma whatever."⁵⁷

In the same issue, William English Walling suggested a less objective attitude in discussing fundamental conflict in American trade unionism. In an article entitled "Class Struggle Within the Working

⁵⁶ IV, 4 (January, 1913).

⁵⁷ Ibid., 5.

Class," he suggested that neither political nor direct action was any good until labor recognized that the real problem was that of the unskilled. He believed that this was happening and that "the whole philosophy that has hitherto underlain Socialism, together with its political and labor union tactics, is being completely revolutionized, then, by the fact that the owner of the job has become the enemy, as much as the owner of capital or the employer of labor."⁵⁸ Although Gompers was the goat, it looked very much as if the I. W. W. and direct action were being given endorsement.

The Masses carefully accepted no official anti-political policy. The cartoon, editorial and article placed the magazine in relation to the conflicts within the Socialist Party. Party councils had rejected direct action for political action, but a left wing which embraced both methods remained powerful, and Debs, the perennial presidential candidate, was closer to the left than to the party bureaucracy. The Masses, without official standing of any kind, became the voice of a large and dynamic element in socialism, taking the leadership without engaging in the details of dogmatic party strife. Indeed, it specifically rejected any dogmatic position.

Such pragmatic thinking was immediately misunderstood, and the more conservative Socialists (and among them must have been a horrified Piet Vlag) labelled the magazine as "syndicalist." To counteract this suggestion of accepted dogma, Sloan drew another cartoon captioned. . "Direct 'Action'," in which a forlorn group of strikers sat hopelessly around a fire in the snow while in the distance their factory,

58 Ibid., 13.

patrolled by soldiers, produced full blast without them.⁵⁹ Eastman, with a touch of asperity in his humor, concluded that the editor's job, instead of demanding a flood of new ideas as he had feared, was simpler, only asking that the same idea be repeated in new dress until it finally penetrated. Again he stated the dangerous "tendency of every man to turn his pet idea into a little god."

In theory, then, the Masses accepted all methods leading toward socialism; yet in practice, it was clearly a vehicle for left-wing thought. An article in the issue which satirized direct action brilliantly summarized the ill-fated McNamara case and the bribery trial of Clarence Darrow. Unlike the more conservative group of Socialists, Max Eastman refused to abandon the Structural Iron Workers when they were caught. "They had the courage to be criminals in the defence of their union," he wrote, "Those who feel called on to decide whether they are good or bad men . . . are welcome to the job. The question I want to ask -- as a serious proposal to your practical intelligence -- is this: If the Steel Trust is determined to fight the emancipation of its workers by every means that money, and fraud, and the control of government, provides, how do you expect the workers to fight the Steel Trust?"

His answer was to organize class-conscious agitation to form revolutionary unions to fight Steel both directly and through class-conscious voting. "You can start with this conviction of the dynamiters," he proposed, "if you will stand with them and for them as your brothers, whether

59 IV, 4 (February, 1913).

you think they went wrong or not -- you can make this event not the end of a secret conspiracy, but the beginning of an open revolutionary agitation that will strike into the very heart of capitalism in this country."⁶⁰ Art Young's cartoon on the back cover showed a gigantic and brutal soldier sitting indifferently on a striker and pinning his arm to the ground with a bayonet. The well-dressed gentleman in a top hat who observed as the "serene on-looker" said: "Very unfortunate situation, but whatever you do, don't use force."⁶¹ Whatever the editor might say about class-conscious voting, it was almost impossible to illustrate effectively.

The editors were unquestionably drawn to the I. W. W. through the great Paterson silk strike in 1913 and an active association with its leaders. Their sympathies were fully opposed to an alliance with Socialist politicians, and they were searching for a more adequate base in the labor movement. The mine workers of West Virginia and Colorado, most nearly "syndicalist" of the A. F. of L. unions, were given support along with the frankly anarcho-syndicalist I. W. W. Yet, this support was not based on revolutionary romanticism. In an attempt to explain the fearful symbolism of the letters iww, Eastman concluded: "The I. W. W. is a kind of extreme outpost of the Socialist movement An organization possessed by the spirit of the I. W. W., a spirit wholly belligerent, somewhat negative and irresponsible -- can not and will not usher in the day of industrial democracy. But as agitators, awakening the workers to the philosophy of Socialism pure, producing among capitalists that antagonism which is a seal of its truth, the service of the leaders of the I. W. W.

60 Ibid., 3.

61 IV, 20 (February, 1913).

to Socialism is invaluable."⁶² The Masses and the I. W. W. were engaged in the same business --- through agitation drawing the line between capital and labor, and as such, they were allies despite their difference in aim. The I. W. W., by the nature of its violent and dramatic offensive against capital, furnished exciting copy both for journalists and writers of fiction. John Reed and Austin Lewis, to name two, made full use of the material for the Masses, but placed within the editorial scheme, these contributions were a logical part of the battle "Towards Liberty."

Where there was a connection between syndicalism and the magazine, there was no link with anarchism, which Eastman found illogical and false. The leading anarchists of the time were Alexander Berkman, Ben Reitman and Emma Goldman with a host of supporters from the "intellectual" left. The term "intellectual," applied to anarchists, meant rather a bohemian urge for individual freedom from social pressures than a drive for scientific revolution. Eastman found completely self-centered individualism purely negative. The whole anarchist movement was literary in its nature, as Eastman saw it, and in rejecting science for aspiration and elaborate plans, it was so removed from modern times that many anarchists had gleefully accepted the entire program of the I. W. W. simply because it offered a means of action.

Essentially, as Eastman saw Anarchism, it was an atavism, a return to the philosophy of natural right and pre-industrial individualism

62 IV, 6 (August, 1913). Additional support for approval of the I. W. W. came, ironically enough, from a reprinted newsletter by Roger Babson (V, 20, December, 1913) in which he advised business men that much as they might dislike it, the I. W. W. was closer to the industrial truth than the A. F. of L. and in some form would survive and probably ultimately win.

which demanded liberty as a negative thing -- a desire to be let alone -- and was thus dangerously close to laissez-faire capitalism. In twentieth century terms the anarchists were akin to such types of the industrial tyrant as John D. Rockefeller, said Eastman, both in method and in theory. "Anarchy," he wrote, "is the raw material of despotism." Even the much-vaunted and much-feared "propaganda of the deed" was a foolish survival of individualism. "The practice of individual praise-and-blame, the old-fashioned business of moral evangelism (of which assassination is perhaps only an extreme instance) seems to be the essence of their method," he concluded, "and it belongs almost as properly to the past as their philosophy, which is in reality a dying scream of the eighteenth century attempt at human liberty."⁶³ H. J. Glintenkamp illustrated the anarchist sitting at a cafe table against a background of dancing couples: "He: 'Did you know that I am an Anarchist and a Free-lover?' She: 'Oh, indeed! -- I thought you were a Boy Scout.'"⁶⁴

While a good deal of attention was given to varying attempts at

63 V, 5 (August, 1914). The anarchists responded with a thorough dislike both for Max Eastman and the Masses, excluding them from the 1914 Revolutionary Almanac. The magazine defended individual anarchists such as Emma Goldman on specific occasions when they were unjustly treated either by the law or mob violence, but Goldman found Eastman's position on anarchy an example of narrow Marxism, and Hutchins Hapgood always felt Eastman to be cold and inhuman in his scientific reliance. See Emma Goldman, Living My Life (New York, 1931), which for all its fascination as a document of the time gives credence to Eastman's summary of anarchism and suffers generally from her bitter disillusionment with Lenin and the early Soviet state's treatment of the anarchists. The discussion of Eastman occurs on pages 689-90. Hutchins Hapgood, whose autobiography, A Victorian in the Modern World (New York, 1939), is a charming and penetrating revelation of a man and the history and people he had known, disliked revolutionists chiefly because they were "illusioned specialists" who disturbed the happiness of human beings, violating the end by the means (pp. 448-9). The reasonableness (which was certainly present) was, in Hapgood's case, perhaps too sweet for a difficult world.

64 VIII, 12 (December, 1915).

reform, to syndicalism and to anarchism and to the proper revolutionary tactics, the magazine made little direct analysis of the Socialist Party until just before the campaign of 1916. By almost completely avoiding the doctrinaire political interests of the Socialists, the Masses implied that the Party was not a revolutionary instrument. In July, 1916, when Meyer London, the Socialist Representative, apologized to the House for unnecessarily revolutionary language about the deprivation of Puerto Ricans of the vote, Arturo Giovannitti raised some sly questions about what happened to a Socialist in the clubrooms of Congress.⁶⁵ In September, Helen Marot spoke up about the ex-Socialist mayor of Schenectady, George Lunn, demonstrating that he had never been a Socialist, but rather a liberal who was interested in the "people" rather than the working class.⁶⁶ But these were minor things and did not record the magazine's full attitude toward Socialist politics. It was Eastman's personal stand on the Wilson-Hughes-Benson election campaign which clarified the Masses' general position, bringing the magazine into the open as primarily dedicated to direct action through labor organization rather than the election of Socialists to office. A choice which rejected one method and chose the other was finally made.

Although he voted the Socialist ticket, Eastman remained so free from politics that he gave a statement just before the election to the Woodrow Wilson Independent League endorsing Wilson as compared with Hughes. For this action, he was excommunicated by a horde of Socialists. He responded with an article, "Sect or Class," in which Allan L. Benson, the Socialist candidate, was lamented as a non-working class representa-

⁶⁵ VIII, 32 (July, 1916).

⁶⁶ VIII, 38 (September, 1916).

tive of Socialism who should therefore not be a political representative. Refusing a Socialist the right to do anything but go right down the line for the Party was condemned as dogmatism. He concluded: "What it [the Socialist Party] has to do now, is to get rid of all this sectarian dogmatism, this doctrinaire, index expurgatorius mode of thinking, and this infatuation with an organization as an end in itself. Let us try to use our brains freely, love progress more than a party, allow ourselves the natural emotions of our species, and see if we can get ready to play a human part in the actual complex flow of events."⁶⁷

This was individual liberty with a vengeance, and under the caption "Aid and Comfort," Eugene Wood claimed in the next issue (his letter was printed as the best of many) that the careless running to Wilson by Eastman, Reed, Walling, Ernest Poole and others was a major cause of the Party's loss of strength and the final undeserved blow to thousands of hard-working and faithful Socialists. The position of Eastman and the magazine was of such importance, said Wood, that he had to be exceedingly careful of what he said. "Caesar's wife can't go around beefing that it's a hell of a note if a perfect lady can't be seen coming out of a dollar hotel with a nice young man at 2 o'clock in the morning, without doctrinaires and sectarians flapping their dirty mouths."⁶⁸

The printing of this vivid and telling letter was evidence of the Masses' belief in liberty as well as its sense of humor. Nevertheless, Eastman explained the next month that as the European experience of the World War had demonstrated, war ended working-class effectiveness; hence,

67 IX, 16 (December, 1916).

68 IX, 20 (January, 1917).

because Wilson ultimately had the one-man power for war or peace, it was important to Socialists that he be elected rather than Hughes. If this seemed dangerously opportunistic, Eastman pointed out that both the editors and the magazine had been the most insistent in stressing the shallowness of the "reform" conception of Wilson. "Our line-up," he said of the Socialists, "will never hold the field in politics until labor is strong and solidary enough on the industrial field to force it."⁶⁹

Although this analysis admirably fitted the magazine's insistence upon an instrumentalist approach to a society in a state of continuous flux, it in no way answered Wood's statement of the faith and loyalty absolutely prerequisite to political success. In theory, the magazine steered clear of dogma, but in this case, Eastman clearly stated what the Masses had implied all along. "And meantime as before," he claimed, "our chief preoccupation ought not to be politics at all, but the struggle of organized labor for industrial sovereignty."⁷⁰ Although as facts later showed, he was right for American labor both in terms of the effect of war and the need to concentrate on organization; despite the circumstances, the statement clearly rejected political for direct action in a stand which was dangerously near dogma. The magazine would have had a shorter career under "party discipline" than it had under the repressive efforts of capitalism.

Two months later, Eastman had his say again on what he called "theological automism" in the Socialist Party. The tendency to clap the creed over the facts whether they fit or not meant that "a readymade first-aid solution of any question that might arise was assumed to be at

⁶⁹ IX, 24 (February, 1917).

⁷⁰ Loc. cit.

hand in the Communist Manifesto and the party-platform, and anyone who had anything else to say would be a heretic and a traitor to 'the working-class'." Samuel Gompers, said Eastman, was closer to reality in America than was Morris Hillquit because he preferred action to theory. "It [the Socialist Party] fails because it approaches human nature with an abstract theory when the core of human nature is always a concrete wish." He rejected as absurd the notion that any sweeping political action could be founded on or grow out of those who understood Marxian economics; the party must be made up, instead, of those who are doing something. "The Socialist party," he forecast, "will never become the party of the labor struggle until it subordinates the idea and builds around the will. And if the Socialist party does not become the party of the labor struggle, another and a wiser party will take its place."⁷¹

With this final prophetic blast, the Masses turned its attention to the war and the new Russia, finding a threat to all progress in the first and a hope for the future in the second. The focus of the magazine had been kept on a combination of liberty and industrial democracy, of the individual and society re-interpreted in twentieth century industrial terms. The politics of traditional democracy, at first welcomed as one method of revolutionizing the world, had increasingly been rejected in conservative, liberal and Socialist parties. The labor struggle became the most important issue of the magazine, and it was in reporting the plight of unskilled labor that the editors did their most brilliant work.

⁷¹ IX, 6-7 (April, 1917).

CHAPTER III

FIGHTING FOR LABOR

The editorial policy of the Masses attempted an objective balance between the alternative methods of direct and political action, but an editorial leaning toward direct action through labor organization was foreshadowed from the beginning in its treatment of industrial conflicts. The most violent yet profoundly serious concern of the magazine was with the attempt of labor, especially the unskilled, to organize and obtain minimum concessions in the face of concerted, powerful and ruthless opposition. The Masses' editors and contributors, beginning with the aftermath of the Lawrence strike, the Paterson silk strike of 1913 and the struggles of the West Virginia miners, fought labor's battles against the employers, the constabulary, the gunmen, the troops and the press -- with the American Federation of Labor as an occasional opponent on the side.

The early years of the second decade were characterized in part by "a sort of offensive and defensive alliance of the younger intelligentsia and the awakened members of the labor groups."¹ Randolph Bourne and other intellectuals of The New Republic and The Seven Arts considered their task to be one of thoughtful leadership, since, as Bourne wrote: "The labor movement in this country needs a philosophy, a literature, a constructive socialist analysis and criticism of industrial relations. Labor will scarcely do the thinking for itself."² With this position, the Masses'

1 Van Wyck Brooks, Introduction to Randolph Bourne, The History of a Literary Radical (New York, 1920), xx.

2 Quoted in ibid., xxviii.

editors sympathized, but they thought their function was to help fight the day by day battles as well -- to understand intimately and truly the actual conditions of labor violence. It was this idea that led John Reed to Paterson and jail with the strike leaders, Max Eastman, as well as Reed, to Ludlow, Colorado and Mary Heaton Vorse to the Mesabi mines. They wanted to know at first hand the struggle of the workers so they might fully join in the fight on the side they had chosen.³ As a result, the pages of the Masses were instinct with the living, dire brutality of the labor struggle in a way which could be duplicated in few if any other publications.

The history of labor has been marked by waves of effort on the part of working men and their leaders to attain justice and a better life.⁴ The years from 1910 to 1915 were filled with an almost universal labor unrest accompanying and driving on the general swing to the left of the American people. The maturity of an industrial and finance system, which began with the formation of United States Steel in 1901 and progressed rapidly into ever more intricate and inter-dependent structures with in-

3 Albert Parry, Garrets and Pretenders, 282, said: "When Max Eastman came down from Columbia to take over Vlag's job he made the Masses more artistic and literary, but he neither added to nor detracted from its quantity of social protest." Allowing for a quibble on the meaning of "quantity of social protest," this generally accepted judgment is quite misleading. Precisely in its labor reporting, the later Masses changed greatly both in quantity and quality.

4 See Selig Perlman and Philip Taft, History of Labor in the United States (New York, 1935). This is Volume IV in John R. Commons et.al., History of Labor in the United States, reprinted 1940, which is still the fundamental scholarly treatment of labor history. See also for diverse points of view Anthony Bimba, The History of the American Working Class (New York, 1927); Louis Adamic, Dynamite: The Story of Class Violence in America (New York, 1931); Norman Ware, The Labor Movement in the United States, 1860-1895; Philip S. Foner, History of the Labor Movement in the United States (New York, 1947); and Foster Rhea Dulles, Labor in America, A History (New York, 1949).

creasingly remote and impersonal control, sharpened a conflict which remained intensely personal for each laboring man faced with the absentee ownership of finance capital.

The labor struggle was marked necessarily by violence, since most labor gains were opposed with ruthless force. The most telling evidence of the violent nature of industrial strife during the period was the report of the "Walsh Commission," which was submitted to the Senate exactly three years after passage of the Act authorizing a government investigation.⁵ During these years, trained investigators under the leadership of Frank Walsh of Missouri held hearings in various parts of the country, summoning witnesses as disparate as John D. Rockefeller, Jr. and "Mother" Jones, J. P. Morgan and heretofore anonymous striker's wives. Out of the mass of evidence gathered, the Director of Research, Basil M. Manly, concluded that "Political freedom can exist only where there is industrial freedom; political democracy only where there is industrial democracy."⁶ This generalization was of vital importance to the nation since there were "thousands of workers, skilled and unskilled, organized and unorganized, who feel bitterly that they and their fellows are being denied justice, economically, politically, and legally. Just how widespread this feeling is or whether there is imminent danger of a quickening into active, nation-wide revolt, none can say."⁷

5 Industrial Relations, Final Report and Testimony submitted to Congress by the Commission on Industrial Relations created by the Act of August 23, 1912, 64th Congress, 1st Session, Senate, Document No. 415, Vol. I, Washington, Government Printing Office, 1916.

6 Ibid., 18.

7 Loc. cit.

Manly quoted many witnesses who spoke for millions of people, and concluded that there were four main sources of discontent: "one, an unjust distribution of wealth and income; two, unemployment and the denial of opportunity to earn a living; three, a denial of justice in the creation, the adjudication, and in the administration of the law; and four, the denial of the right and opportunity to form effective organizations."⁸ Instances of the truth of such charges were multiplied to demonstrate that whether or not anti-labor practices were universal, they existed in such quantity as to form a real challenge to American democracy.

The Masses group worked with the same living material to demonstrate, with a force and power which even the unusually vivid and frank congressional report dared not use, the existence of ruthless class injustice in the industrial system of the United States. The heritage of political freedom gave special characteristics to the class struggle in America. "The American underdog has been taught to believe that, essentially, he is as good as the next man, if not a little better," wrote Louis Adamic, "and as such has the right to refuse to stay an underdog, and to do everything possible to climb upward."⁹ The result of this psychology was an intensely dramatic conflict between two powerful protagonists, the one struggling for his privileges, the other for his rights. The war was often enough to the death, as the Masses group discovered. When John Chamberlain and other critics of the period described the young intellectuals of the time as playboys who "had not looked upon the death that

⁸ Loc. cit.

⁹ Adamic, Dynamite, 362.

the system under which they had been reared was capable of dealing,"¹⁰ they were perhaps speaking correctly of The New Republic group but not of the Masses.

An actual participation in industrial battles on the part of Masses writers and artists produced a very high degree of indignation, especially among the artists, with a consequent emotional truth — gained at the expense of a careful objectivity no doubt. Objectivity was, in any case, no part of the aim of these avowed partisans. "And yet," wrote Mary Heaton Vorse, "the sense of indignation which we shared was not the whole story. It was far more complex than that. It was seeing of what beauty human beings are capable. Here in Lawrence was the flame; that surging forward toward the light which is the distinction of mankind."¹¹ On this ground the hard pragmatism of editorial theory could meet the intense feeling of the creative artist and be merged in one. Barbed satire and naturalistic journalism alive with deep feeling constituted the chief method of attack of the Masses against the "system" in defense of labor.

During the first five months of 1913, before the magazine intimately faced a major strike, Eastman wrote an anti-injunction editorial on the occasion of the needle-workers' strike of 1913 which traced the way of the arrested workers to the court-room where they were convicted of various charges on the uncorroborated testimony of a single policeman in each case. For some reason, the whole weight of government was employed to force the workers back to their jobs. "Now that unaccountable reason," wrote Eastman, "is nothing but the natural, inevitable, and

10 Chamberlain, Farewell to Reform, 278.

11 Vorse, Footnote to Folly, 14.

oftentimes unconscious working of money influence and money power. There is no democracy, no equality of opportunity, no fundamental justice to be had, where this power is given into the hands of a part of the community, and the other part deprived of it."¹² The line between classes was drawn; the workers were advised to fight by every means at their command; and the Masses discovered its greatest enemy in the courts and law enforcement. The massive middle-class was challenged to answer the question of democracy. "By your answer you place yourself in the fighting march of the heroes of human liberty," wrote the editor, "or you place yourself with the pompous battalions of hereditary power against which they have always fought."¹³ The magazine reserved the right to define for itself the terms of liberty, but the editors offered the same fundamental choice between the money power and the people as had Jacksonian democracy.

The collaboration on labor questions of artists with writers, which typified the effectiveness of the cooperative venture, was early illustrated in the April, 1913 issue by printing on opposite pages a drawing by Maurice Becker and a poem by Louis Untermeyer, each entitled "Sunday." The event Untermeyer wrote about was the march of the Lawrence strikers on a Sunday morning in the previous year to lay flowers on the grave of a young working girl picket who had been killed. Their parade was interrupted by the violence of the police. The poem ironically contrasted the battle in the streets with the services in a nearby church:¹⁴

¹² IV, 3 (March, 1913).

¹³ Loc. cit.

¹⁴ IV, 14 (April, 1913). Two strike leaders, Ettor and Giovannitti, were indicted for this murder in a pattern of suppression which the Masses found again and again. In this case, the leaders were acquitted.

Down the rapt and singing streets of little Lawrence
 Came the stolid columns; and, behind the bluecoats,
 Grinning and invisible, bearing unseen torches,
 Rode red hordes of anger, sweeping all before them.

.....
 And, below the outcry, like the sea beneath the breakers
 Mingling with the anguish rolled the solemn organ. . .
 Eleven in the morning -- people were at church --
 Prayers were in the making -- God was near at hand --
 It was Sunday!

The accompanying cartoon showed a wild melee of helpless men and women struggling against the clubs and guns of the police before the low and massive arch of a closed church door.

The Lawrence strike involved the editors imaginatively in the cause of industrial justice, but on the 25th of February, 1913, a mass strike began in the silk mills of Paterson, New Jersey which was to draw them directly and personally into the labor struggle. The early years of the second decade of the twentieth century were a period of hard times with the usual cutbacks in production and wages. As at Lawrence, the relatively ignorant, unorganized foreign-born workers walked out in protest against the conditions of their work. Again, as in Lawrence, the I. W. W. leaders stepped in to organize the workers and lead the strike. Bill Haywood, Carlo Tresca, Pat Quinlan and Elizabeth Gurley Flynn with their comrades attempted to prevent violence on the part of the workers, to set up soup-kitchens, care for the children and above all give the strike the kind of publicity that Lawrence had.

Before the trouble was over, most of the Masses' leaders had at least shared in the meetings. Max Eastman, who said that he only "attended" the strike, described a typical meeting: "Forbidden to assemble in the city, they would troop out every Sunday, fifteen to twenty thousand of them, to the near-by village of Haledon where a socialist mayor guaranteed free speech and assemblage, and a petty-bourgeois sympathizer

offered them his house and lot. The house was in a meadow, and had an upstairs balcony from which the leaders made their speeches to a crowd that brightened with sharp colors several acres of the grassy slopes around it."¹⁵ The speeches were excellent, and although filled with the violent language necessary to leading an angry fight, they gave specific and detailed instructions how to attain ends without provoking bloody action.

The violence, as the editors learned to observe, was on the other side, among the enforcers of law and order. For their first featured strike story, the Masses printed John Reed's account of "War in Paterson." Opposite the lead story, appeared a Young cartoon of a flag on a dollar-topped standard reading "To hell with your laws! I'll get Haywood, Elizabeth Flynn, or anyone else who interferes with my Profits." The fat, frock-coated, top-hatted, moustached silk-manufacturer who held the flag stood on a ground of torn-up laws and broken rights and addressed with righteous belligerence a gray-faced, knuckle-chewing and nervous Uncle Sam cowering in the downright corner. The caption said simply: "Speaking of Anarchy."¹⁶

Reed began his article, which was for the most part straightforward, factual reporting, yet without pretense of objectivity, with the following words:¹⁷

15 Eastman, Enjoyment of Living, 447.

16 IV, 15 (June, 1913).

17 Ibid., 14. The newspapers were quoted approving mob violence against the strike leaders.

There's war in Paterson. But it's a curious kind of war. All the violence is the work of one side -- the Mill Owners. Their servants, the Police, club unresisting men and women and ride down law-abiding crowds on horseback. Their paid mercenaries, the armed Detectives, shoot and kill innocent people. Their newspapers, the Paterson Press and the Paterson Call, publish incendiary and crime-inciting appeals to mob-violence against the strike leaders. Their tool, Recorder Carroll, deals out heavy sentences to peaceful pickets that the police-net gathers up. They control absolutely the Police, the Press, the Courts.

Opposing them are about twenty-five thousand striking silk-workers, of whom perhaps ten thousand are active, and their weapon is the picket-line. Let me tell you what I saw in Paterson and then you will say which side of this struggle is "anarchistic" and "contrary to American ideals."

The reporter went on to describe his visit to the streets of the mill-town, his request for permission to stand on a porch to escape a rain-storm (permission granted) and his arrest by a suddenly bewildered policeman who had no charge to make against him. Reed stood for his rights, the policeman tried to goad him into saying something for which he could be arrested, and ultimately Reed did. "I had to come all the way to Paterson to put one over on a cop," Reed told them when they were helplessly repeating impotent profanity. His words were unwise, if scarcely illegal (later he would have known better); and he was arrested and stuffed into a filthy jail with about forty high-spirited pickets who sang, cheered and shouted until they were dismissed because the county jail was full.

Reed, however, went before Recorder Carroll (who had "the intelligent, cruel, merciless face of the ordinary police court magistrate") and was immediately sentenced to twenty days on a tissue of lies, as he reported, by the arresting policeman. In the jail were Bill Haywood and a host of strikers who had been arrested, often with violence, on a variety of trumped up charges. They were being held for a Grand Jury on

which sat four silk manufacturers, the head of the local Edison company and not a single workingman. Reed's vivid description of individuals, almost all foreign, emphasized their devotion to the strike and the I. W. W. The local churches were singled out for particular attack as being comparable to Judas. Their treachery to the strikers was summed up in a sermon by a particular clergyman who was named. "He had the impudence," Reed wrote hotly, "to flay the strike leaders and advise workmen to be respectful and obedient to their employers -- to tell them that the saloons were ^{the} cause of their unhappiness -- to proclaim the horrible depravity of Sabbath-breaking workmen, and more rot of the same sort. And this while living men were fighting for their very existence and singing gloriously of the Brotherhood of Man!"¹⁸ As yet, the writer was angrily surprised to find his ideas confirmed by reality.

Reed observed that the church was not alone in deserting the workers. The A. F. of L. and the Socialist party also bore a share of his attack. A young Italian brought Reed a paper with three stories: the first, of an A. F. of L. attempt to break the strike; the second, of the rejection of Haywood and Paterson by Victor Berger; and the third, of the refusal of Newark Socialists to help. The young man asked Reed in broken English for an explanation. Reed wrote: "But I could not explain. All I could say was that a good share of the Socialist Party and the American Federation of Labor have forgotten all about the Class Struggle, and seem to be playing a little game with Capitalistic rules, called 'Button, button, who's got the Vote!'"¹⁹

18 Ibid., 16.

19 Ibid., 17. The Masses carefully reprinted the New York Call's angry response to this unorthodox attack in a supposedly socialist periodical without retracting a word.

Reed got out of jail and joined with Mabel Dodge and others to stage the great Paterson pageant in Madison Square Garden. The pageant lost money despite its dramatic success, and the strike failed.²⁰ Yet the Masses group learned from the experience the difference between violent talk and violent action, the bitter lesson of the "treachery" of purely political socialism and labor, the typical suppression or distortion of news in the press, the treatment of strikers by the courts, and the position of many organized churches in the labor conflict. From this time on, they knew their enemies.

There was little more to be done for that particular strike, despite the new-found knowledge. In August, the Masses was proud to produce over Bill Haywood's signature an example of Recorder Carroll's attempts to "intimidate" the strikers. In November, after the strikers had gone back to work, an interview by Inis Weed and Louise Carey with a fifteen-year old silk weaver was printed. The girl interviewed had some education in Italy, but her entire experience in America from the age of thirteen had been low wages, bad conditions and the "speed-up" under a labor system in which children were contracted for by the year, and half their wages held out until the year had passed. In her particular mill, the strike had led to gains more specific than working-class solidarity: to an increase in wages, an end of child labor and the contract system, the addition of inspectors, fire alarms and whitewash. When asked by the in-

20 Mary Heaton Vorse, Footnote to Folly, 53, said that Elizabeth Gurley Flynn always felt that the disillusionment of the pageant "together with diverting the worker's minds from the actual struggle to the pictorial struggle, was fatal." In any case, it was about this time that Reed began to abandon left-wing liberalism for revolution.

interviewers if these benefits would last, the girl said: "I don't know. If it don't, we strike again."²¹ It was this spirit of courageous struggle which was transferred to the Masses.

In a poem entitled "Paterson" by Rose Pastor Stokes, ex-cigar-maker who had married a millionaire socialist, the threat was dramatized:²²

You dream that we are weaving what you will?
Take care!
Our fingers do not cease:
We've starved -- and lost; but we are weavers still;
And Hunger's in the mill

It was the conventional shroud being woven for the oppressors, but the poetic imagination and skill of the radicals was taking on some strength and power as they began actively to participate in the labor struggle.

When the strike was over, the courts continued with the punishment of the most prominent part of the leadership. As Ettor and Giovannitti had been tried after the Lawrence strike, so six of the leaders at Paterson were under indictment. The Masses helped to publicize the need for funds for the defense: "If the organized forces of capital, government and law can bring it about, these six strike leaders will be sent to jail. It is in the backwash of a strike, the period of dead interest and spent enthusiasm, that such things can be done A conviction in Paterson will put shackles on labor all over the country."²³ Haywood, Tresca and Adolph Lessig were convicted, but the sentence was reversed by the New

21 V, 7 (November, 1913). The strike had an effect, following as it did the national protest against the Lawrence mill owners, but the radicals were very skeptical of such superficial reforms.

22 Ibid., 11.

23 V, 14 (October, 1913).

Jersey Supreme Court, Judge Bergen saying in part: "This conviction had not the slightest evidence to support the judgment that this defendant [Haywood] at the time complained of was a disorderly person."²⁴ "The opinion of Judge Bergen, in dismissing Haywood's case," Reed sardonically wrote, "is such a stinging rebuke as to make the Judge liable under that famous New Jersey statute for 'holding a public officer up to ridicule.'"²⁵

The triumph was short-lived, since shortly afterward Frederick Sumner Boyd was convicted of advocating sabotage in suggesting that the strike could be won from the inside by reducing the efficiency of the machines and making them stop working by applying vinegar to the looms. The efficiency of the machine was defined as property, hence the crime. The Masses responded with a blistering attack on an outdated conception of the life and death value of property when civilization was no longer in the spear and canoe stage. "We accept a civilization which rates Things at a higher value than the people who make them," said the magazine. "Accordingly it is permissible to destroy life, as the employers of labor destroy it. But it is wrong to destroy property, or to advocate its destruction, even for the saving of life And when there is a strike like that in Paterson, most of us agree that 'law and order must be preserved.' By which we mean that the destruction of property must stop and the destruction of life go on as before."²⁶ The idea was not new, but Emerson's "Things" that were in the saddle to ride mankind were applied directly and with heat to a specific situation in an industrial society.

²⁴ V, 19 (December, 1913).

²⁵ Loc. cit.

²⁶ V, 19 (December, 1913).

Early in the strike, the Masses' editors had thought the language of violence necessary; as the post-strike suppression continued, they concluded that the parallel between military warfare and industrial strife was more actual than metaphorical. Maurice Becker drew a dual cartoon of a prisoner led from court and a prosperous citizen carried in triumph by a mob of howling men. The caption of the first was "He Advocates Sabotage at Home," of the second, "He Advocates Murder Abroad."²⁷ Stuart Davis, for his contribution, drew a two-page cartoon entitled "War" in which, against a factory background, a mass of strikers with uplifted hands milled before the buildings. The treatment was a dramatic rendering of black and white, instinct with violence.²⁸

Eastman joined the cartoons together to unify and point up the attack. "There is the contrast," he wrote. "We send our moral warriors to jail, but our aesthetic murderers and advocates of murder we extol and send up to the legislature. We give patriotism, or devotion to an unreal idea, a highest seat among the virtues. But class-conscious solidarity, the spirit of self-sacrifice in the cause of living flesh and blood that suffers and aspires, that we rate with treachery and treason among the sins of hell."²⁹ The class war, as in Davis' picture, was "A stern, desperate, dirty, inglorious and therefore supremely heroic struggle toward a most real end;" while in national wars "those fine glammers of Patriotism and National Honor and Glory are only the silken vestures in which Business has to dress itself before its slaughterings on so large a scale

27 V, 18-19 (January, 1914).

28 Ibid., 12-13

29 Ibid., 19.

will appear properly ceremonious."³⁰ Eight months before the war in Europe began, the Masses took its stand in relation to imperialistic warfare, drawing its conclusions directly from observation of the national labor strife and only incidentally from Marxist theory.

Over a year later, with the conviction of Pat Quinlan for "inciting to riot," the Masses struck its final blow for the leaders of the Paterson strikers, coupling an attack on the courts with an indictment of police evidence. A featured cartoon by K. R. Chamberlain showed a weary judge and five beefy policemen in the witness stand who pointed with machine regularity to a witness and said "We Seen 'im Say It."³¹ The evidence against Quinlan, as the Masses reviewed the case, was certainly framed by the police. Since the Supreme Court could not review questions of fact, the magazine attacked the workings of the jury system. "The fundamental issue," said the magazine, "which of course could not be placed before the courts for review, was of the competence of the jury to pass on the facts of the case where the interests of the petty bourgeoisie were identical with those of the battling capitalists, and where an enemy was on trial before a jury of his enemies and not a jury of his peers."³² The issue lived on, but at the time, no national coverage was apt to be given to radical protests, and there was little opportunity to force changes in the accepted procedure of selecting juries. Although unsuccessful, the Masses tried to play David against a sacrosanct opponent -- the law and the administration of justice.

30 Loc. cit.

31 VI, 17 (April, 1915).

32 Ibid., 16.

From the beginning, the Masses linked an attack on the "kept" press with labor's struggle for recognition. Next to the courts, the force against which the magazine fought most effectively was the daily press and its news-gathering agencies. In December, 1912, the magazine printed a two page cartoon by Art Young called "The Freedom of the Press."³³ Dressed in a sweeping white gown "The Madam, Editor and Proprietor" received a handful of bills from the corpulent, trustified "Big Advertisers." The "girls" sitting in the parlor, many of them recognizable caricatures, included editors, writers, cartoonists and reporters dominated by the figure of the "Business Manager" who stood reading "The Daily Prostitution," cigar competing for attention with short black dress, ham-like forearms and piano legs. Above them hung the motto of the house, "Obey the Madam."

Throughout the nation, the tendency toward a standardized press was marked during this time, and an intimate relationship between the interests of newspaper owners and business was clearly apparent.³⁴ The press was generally free enough for those who owned and managed the papers; but especially to dissenters, the freedom of the press was a bitterly ironic half-truth, valid only for those who agreed with the masters of the system. As many radicals saw it, the journalistic helots did not

33 IV, 10-11 (December, 1912).

34 Historian Harold U. Faulkner, The Quest for Social Justice (New York, 1931), 253, explained that the tendency toward standardization resulted largely from "the syndication of feature articles and pictures, the prevalence of great news-gathering associations and the decided sameness in the economic views held by the owners of the papers." John Flynn, God's Gold (New York, 1932), 484, wrote even more directly in discussing the Rockefellers: "The modern press belongs to business," he said. "It is on the side of business. It is very naturally on the side of the advertiser, particularly the big advertisers." The same general pattern has been pointed out many times.

even know they were enslaved. The Associated Press and other news-gathering agencies were especially suspect. They seemed to many to be the ~~un-~~ willing or unconscious tools of monopolistic control parallel to and identified with the great corporations. And they were the primary source of news, even to papers which seemed independent.

A general attack on the "trustification" of the news was common, but the Masses made generalities specific. Throughout the winter of 1912-13, the almost continuous warfare in the West Virginia coal mines took on an exceptional violence.³⁵ The militia was called out, the governor declared martial law, and the strikers were treated with exceptional severity by mine-guards and soldiers alike. In reprinting a miner's poem from the International Socialist Review, the Masses told part of the story, but pin-pointed a special villain: "The general public knows absolutely nothing of the armed tyranny which that declaration of martial law signifies The representative of the Associated Press is the Provost Marshall. People who visit the West Virginia miners speak of 'returning' to the United States when they leave."³⁶

By the next month, Young and Eastman had worked out their attack. Young drew a cartoon of a reservoir labelled "The News" above a large city. A skulking figure identified as "The Associated Press" poured into the water the contents of bottles of poison containing "Hatred of Labor

35 The story is fully told from the radicals' side in Charles E. Russell, Doing Us Good and Plenty (Chicago, 1914) and even more vividly in Mary Harris Jones, Autobiography of Mother Jones (Chicago, 1925). The latter is an intensely interesting personal record of the most dramatic woman labor organizer of the time.

36 IV, 9 (June, 1913).

Organization," "Prejudice," "Slander," "Suppressed Facts" and "Lies." The caption read "Poisoned at the Source."³⁷ "So long as the substance of current history continues to be held in cold storage, adulterated, colored with poisonous intentions, and sold to the highest bidder to suit his private purposes," Eastman specified, "there is small hope that even the free and the intelligent will take the side of justice in the struggle that is before us It shows that the one thing which all tribes and nations in time have held sacred -- the body of the Truth -- is for sale to organized capital in the United States."³⁸ The Associated Press, stung by similar but less telling attacks from Collier's Weekly, The Outlook and The Independent, chose the Masses for its opponent, and failing with John Doe proceedings before the New York municipal court, succeeded in interesting the District Attorney and the Grand Jury to the extent that Art Young and Max Eastman were indicted in December for criminal libel.

The little magazine, suddenly finding that it had scored a penetrating hit, rallied its meager defenses against its giant opponent. Lawyer Gilbert Roe, an ex-partner of Senator Robert M. LaFollette, agreed to take the defense. Art Young sketched a Mutt and Jeff pair appearing before the bar of justice, and Floyd Dell, who joined the magazine in time for the battle, told the story. "If you control or influence any avenue of publicity in the country," he urged, "go out and help us get the case before the public. And if you know any other way to contribute to a

37 IV, 6 (July, 1913).

38 Ibid., 6

legal struggle, do not pause or postpone it. The issue is not ours, it is yours."³⁹ The Socialist press immediately supported the Masses as the New York Call was quoted: "To have got under the hide of this organization means that some accurate shooting has been done and it is a foregone conclusion that behind them, helping them -- and congratulating them -- will be the whole Socialist party."⁴⁰ The national organization set about gathering facts to help Eastman and Young; instead of a midget, the Associated Press discovered it had engaged a multi-headed monster.

Many members of the press association flew to the defence of the A. P. The New York Evening Post, in a long editorial, supported the Associated Press and quoted an official as saying that the case was "not being prosecuted in a spirit of revenge," but simply to clear up charges appearing in many places. To which the Masses responded ironically:⁴¹

Just why this particular "opportunity" was chosen for the Clarification is not made perfectly plain.

Nor is it made plain just why the people's taxes should be used to pay for an investigation of the Associated Press in the criminal courts, when every precedent points to a civil action for damages as the natural procedure.

Nor is it made clear just why, "in no vengeful spirit," it was found necessary to have two people indicted, to say nothing of having two people indicted twice for the same alleged offense.

. . . . Meanwhile watch this page for indictments.

In pluralizing "indictment," the Masses was referring to a second charge which had been filed, citing Eastman and Young for criminal libel against the person of Frank B. Noyes, the president of the Associated Press. The claim was that the skulking figure of Young's cartoon repre-

39 V. 3 (January, 1914).

40 V. 2 (February, 1914).

41 Ibid., 3.

sented Noyes, as it probably did. Ida Rauh, lawyer as well as Eastman's wife, argued a demurrer against the second indictment, showing, as Dell carefully traced in the magazine, that the second effort by the Associated Press had another motive than avenging the libeled president. The lawyers were trying to prevent the subpoena of the records of the AP's Pittsburgh office. By dropping the first charge, they hoped that these records would not be admitted as evidence against the personal charge. "Apparently, then, if the District Attorney's Office succeeds in its design," Dell concluded, "no investigation of the records of the Associated Press will be possible. Whether what The Masses said about the organization is true or false, will have nothing to do with the case." Since the AP professed only to wish for a public vindication, this was, as Dell commented, "to say the least, an interesting development."⁴²

The Masses' irony was effective, but the editors needed more than their own efforts and resources. A mass meeting was held at Cooper Union led by Inez Milholland, Amos Pinchot, Lincoln Steffens, Charlotte Perkins Gilman, Norman Hapgood and Joe Cannon of the Western Federation of Miners. The major speech was delivered by Pinchot, who willingly accepted a share of the Masses' guilt. "I am perfectly willing to stand behind the charge made by Eastman and Young that The Associated Press does color and distort the news," he said firmly, "that it is not impartial, and that it is a monopolistic corporation, not only in constraint of news but in constraint of truth."⁴³

⁴² V, 14 (March, 1914).

⁴³ Quoted from the Times in V, 18 (April, 1914).

The AP's supporters were reduced to vituperation. The austere New York Times replied on March 7th with a violent editorial assault on radicals, the Masses and Mr. Pinchot. The tone could be gathered from the first paragraph: "Nowadays those who bawl loudest for freedom of speech are persons who make or wish to make the unworthiest use of the privilege. When men or women inciting mobs to riot and pillage come into collision with the police we always hear much prating about freedom of speech." Pinchot was rebuked for failing to understand that the criminal, rather than civil, action was taken by the government to punish the lawless. Moreover, "the indictment of Eastman and Young makes certain that an investigation will be had, a thorough, searching, and perfectly impartial investigation If the Associated Press has guilty secrets they will get full publicity. What more can be asked by the volunteer defenders of the press against an odious monopoly?"⁴⁴ The condition implied in the cartoon under indictment, said the Times, was impossible, since the Association served all kinds of newspapers of varying shades of political opinion, and such distortion of truth would be followed by an uproar. "If the assailants of the Associated Press would now and then find something true to say about it, if they would base their arguments on some other structure than one built up of glaring falsehoods and owl-ish stupidities, their antics would be more interesting."⁴⁵

That this answer evaded the issues was obvious, but Mr. Pinchot's reply nevertheless directly accepted the challenge of the Times. He demonstrated with considerable effectiveness that members of the Association were objecting to colored news, and that the organization was so tightly

⁴⁴ Ibid., 18.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 18

controlled that members were completely subject to the orders of the managers of the AP under penalty of various disciplines or expulsion without recourse. Editors of member newspapers were cited as having told Pinchot that the Masses' charges were "well within the truth." The members themselves dared not protest, since only the Associated Press could bring them the news if they were morning papers.

Furthermore, said Pinchot, the claim by the Times that the AP wanted an investigation was false. He cited the evidence of the attempt to drop the first charge and prevent the subpoena of the records. With a good deal more balance and reason than his opponent, Pinchot proposed a series of reforms to follow a thorough investigation: "The nature of the Associated Press, its control over the distribution of news and the size and scope of its operations demand that it shall be considered a common carrier in the sense that railroads are common carriers. Its service must be open to all those who can pay for it, its control known and all of its operations conducted with the fullest publicity."⁴⁶

The letter ended with a challenge to the Times: "I hope that in spite of the by-laws of the Associated Press, which I realize would, under ordinary circumstances, prohibit your publishing what I have written, you may decide that the present situation would justify you in doing so."⁴⁷ Mr. Pinchot and the Masses had the great newspaper where they wanted it. Caught with the facts against it, the Times ignored Pinchot's letter. But it was published when he sent it to the editor of the New York Sun, as well as in the Masses. The magazine won that round.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 19.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 19.

Art Young drew a funny cartoon of the Masses' editors meeting in shivering fright below the folded-armed figure of the AP. "If there has been a feebleness of expression, a tremulous note, throughout the literature and pictures in THE MASSES the last eight months," he mockingly added, "our readers must remember that during this time we have been haunted by a dreadful nightmare. 'Beware!' says the presiding spirit of 894 American newspapers, clanking with medals and honorable tributes from all the crowned heads of Europe and most of Asia. 'Beware!' (In deep sepulchral tones) 'The Jail!'"⁴⁸ To emphasize their defiance, the editors printed another poem by "A Paint Creek Miner" entitled "The Kanawha Striker." It was a perfect Italian sonnet which ended:⁴⁹

Is this the land my fathers fought to own --
 Here where they curse me -- beaten and alone?
 But God, it's cold! My children sob and cry!
 Shall I go back into the mines and wait,
 And lash the conflagration of my hate --
 Or shall I stand and fight them till I die!

For all their scorn for their opponent, the editors were worried. They fully recognized the power of the Associated Press and its legal staff. Eastman consulted Arthur Brisbane, whom he knew.⁵⁰ Brisbane sent him to Samuel Untermyer, who after piling up millions as a corporation lawyer, had become strongly public-spirited. Untermyer, showed the cartoon, said that of course it was libelous, not to tell anyone of his connection with the case or it might be dropped, and finally that he would

48 Ibid., 3

49 Ibid., 16

50 Eastman said of Brisbane in The Enjoyment of Living, 472, that in memory of his father, the radical exponent of Fourier, the son never attacked a radical. It was a law of his life.

appear and subpoena everyone from J. P. Morgan on down and have the thing out. He himself, as Eastman told the story, could prove the part about the news being kept in cold storage.⁵¹ The case disappeared from public attention.

During the two years that the suit hung over Eastman and Young, the Masses did not ignore the press. It twitted the AP for delivering some of the news on the Ludlow strike, a concession for which they took part credit. "The general public knows a little something about it this time," the magazine said proudly. "The demand for a bit of real news from these fights has got home to the powers. And we are thankful we played our small part in driving it home."⁵²

During 1914 appeared Socialist Charles E. Russell's old-fashioned but thorough muckraking of the press hush-up in West Virginia, Calumet, Michigan and Ludlow, Colorado. Crammed with facts comparing actual events with the stories released, Russell's book concluded: "Such things can happen and do happen and either the press will not report them at all or it will give of them distorted and perverted accounts creating the impression that the victims of these outrages were themselves the lawbreakers."⁵³ His description of the course of events paralleled the exact abuses which the Masses stressed.⁵⁴

So here are the plain facts about this matter. You pass Laws to secure better conditions for labor. The corporations refuse to obey those laws and the officers of the state by

51 Eastman, Enjoyment of Living, 472. It was a good story.

52 V, 18 (June, 1914).

53 Russell, Doing Us Good and Plenty, 47.

54 Ibid., 97.

their own admission find themselves powerless to enforce the statutes against so great a power.

Workingmen strike to secure the rights guaranteed to them by these broken laws.

The corporations bring in gunmen to shoot down the strikers.

Civil War ensues with scenes of revolting slaughter.

Most newspapers carefully suppress the facts. Those that tell what has happened are sued for libel by the corporations.

There was no response from the Associated Press, which had, with some outside help, investigated itself and found itself guiltless.⁵⁵

In February, 1915, the Masses noted that it heard the case was due to be heard. In January, 1916, Art Young removed the press from the brothel to a comfortable domesticity with two fat and pompous figures labelled "The Press" and "Capitalism" seated above the caption "Business as Usual."⁵⁶ The next month the case was dismissed, and chortling with glee, the magazine printed Young's cartoon of the AP as a haughty dowager sailing down the street carrying a purse with a dollar sign, some bundles marked "choice news" and "probity" and a small dog labelled "aristocracy." On the sidewalk behind the proud lady lay a small roll marked "the Masses libel proceedings." The caption said with telling simplicity: "Madame, you dropped something."⁵⁷

55 See Oswald Garrison Villard, Fighting Years (New York, 1939) for a liberal editor's indignant whitewash of the Associated Press. Anyone familiar with modern wire-services might, however, still raise interesting questions about the distortion of the news.

56 VIII, 8 (January, 1916).

57 VIII, 17 (February, 1916).

The relief must have been great. In any case, the humor of the group was stimulated to the point that Young did a full two-page re-drawing of the original cartoon, substituting an angel of light for the skulking Associated Press, "Christian Duty" for the bottles, and "Truth," "Pure Motives," "Love of Labor" and "Generous Spirit" for the contents. In the corner knelt two penitent figures, Young and Eastman, before a burning candle. The caption read: "April Fool."⁵⁸ The whole sequence was made to order for the Masses. The issue was a vital one to the labor struggle, the little men were engaged in the drama of giant-killing and above all, the Associated Press worked itself into a ridiculous position which was fair game for the most brilliant satirists of the time. The facts dug up by countless Socialists and other sympathizers were turned over to Upton Sinclair when the Masses no longer needed them. The case was documented in full in Sinclair's angrily violent study of the American press, The Brass Check.⁵⁹

Shortly after the start of the trouble with the Associated Press in January, 1914, the magazine began its fullest and most impressive piece of labor journalism. The Masses' brilliant and angry story of the Colorado coal strike brought together the courts, the press and the labor struggle at its most vivid and dreadful. In the Fall of 1913, a mass strike began in the mining properties of the Colorado Fuel and Iron Company, a Rockefeller-controlled company, which was to explode on April 20th

58 VIII, 16-17 (April, 1916).

59 Upton Sinclair, The Brass Check (Pasadena, California, 1920). There are probably better editions for paper and type. This was the eighth, published by the author for reasons the contents easily explain.

of 1914 into the Ludlow "Massacre," one of the most brutal events in the history of the American labor movement. The strike automatically became a lock-out since the company owned mines, land, houses and towns. The miners were forced to leave company property; the notorious Baldwin-Felts Agency furnished mine guards with their weapons (as appeared in the testimony before the Walsh Commission, many of them went straight from West Virginia to Colorado).

After a month and a half of the strike, the governor of Colorado sent the militia. By April, the miners were installed in a tent-city near Ludlow, Colorado not far from Trinidad, and the militia detachment was reduced to about thirty-five men, recruited in part on the scene from among mine guards and deputies, under the command of Major P. J. Hamrock and Lieutenant E. K. Linderfeldt. "Mother" Jones, who went to Colorado as soon as the strike began, described the preliminaries in her autobiography:⁶⁰

The miners armed, armed as it is permitted every American citizen to do in defense of his home, his family; as he is permitted to do against invasion. The smoke of armed battle rose from the arroyos and ravines of the Rocky Mountains.

No one listened. No one cared. The tickers in the offices of 26 Broadway sounded louder than the sobs of women and children. Men in the steam heated luxury of Broadway offices could not feel the stinging cold of Colorado hillsides where families lived in tents.

60 Autobiography of Mother Jones, 191. The Masses had recognized the attempt of Colorado troops to deport Mother Jones by printing a blistering attack by Eastman to accompany a Young cartoon of the lone woman facing charging cavalry saying "Come on you Hell Hounds." V.7 (February, 1914). The indomitable old lady went right back to Trinidad and spent days in a basement dungeon, imprisoned by the militia for no committed crime.

Then came Ludlow and the nation heard. Little children roasted alive make a front page story. Dying by inches of starvation and exposure does not.

Mary Harris Jones was a good hater, but for all the color of her story, essentially it was fact. The Associated Press sent special correspondents, Metropolitan Magazine sent John Reed and the Masses sent Max Eastman to Trinidad.

The Masses' covers were always striking, but the lurid flames backing the crouched figure of a miner with a dead child over one arm and a blazing pistol in the free hand gave John Sloan's cover for April, 1914 a sinister and shocking violence which leaped from the newsstands covered with conventional pretty girls. The leading article was an equally shocking report from Eastman under the title "Class War in Colorado."⁶¹

Eastman said in his autobiography that this was the one time when he, personally, wanted to take a rifle and join in the killing; yet he put the blame for the crime, not upon the hired thugs and gunmen, but upon the controlling interests. As he wrote bitterly at the time, it was natural for the Rockefeller interests to adopt tyranny and exploitation, to flout state law to "drive back their cattle with a lash But I think the cool collecting for this purpose of hundreds of degenerate adventurers in blood from all the slums and vice camps of the earth, arming them with high power rifles, explosive and soft-nosed bullets, and putting them beyond the law in uniforms of the national army, is not natural. It is not human. It is lower, because colder, than the blood-lust of the gunmen themselves." Despite the direct violence, said Eastman, "I put that crime, not upon its perpetrators, who are savage, but upon the gentlemen of noble leisure who hired them to this service."

61 V, 5-8 (June, 1914). Succeeding quotations in the next few pages are from this story.

The angry editor did not lose sight of his predominantly eastern audience and anticipated the dismissal of the strike violence as "local" and as "western." "The commanding generals," he said, "are not here, the armies are not here -- only the outposts." This event was only a skirmish in the carefully organized effort to wipe out ruthlessly all attempts of labor to organize. Far from "western," the strike represented men who spoke fifty-seven languages and dialects around a town of fifteen thousand (Trinidad) which was more thoroughly typical of modern America than an eastern city of fifty thousand.

The open warfare was traced by Eastman to the first murder, that of union organizer Gerald Lippiat, who was shot dead in the streets of Trinidad by two Baldwin-Felts detectives three months before the strike. The two gunmen were engaged in spotting union men. Such intimidation was against the specific law of Colorado, as were five out of seven of the strike grievances -- "an incident which shows more plainly than usual what the State is in essence, an excellent instrument for those who have the economic power to use it."

Local residents were quoted in detail on the miner's grievances, to reveal the obvious truth that there was nothing "revolutionary" in the strike. The "ignorant foreigners" were gentle and long-suffering, living through unimagined hardships in their tents in winter under the constant provocation of guards and deputies. In fact, the significant thing about them was that they were no longer "ignorant." Many of them brought in from Europe ten years earlier to break a strike, they were heartily approved so long as they remained docile; but once the miners had learned English and begun to acquire an interest in American rights and laws, they rebelled "because their employers were daily violating these laws

and these principles at the expense of their lives and their happiness, and they knew it."⁶²

In the Fall of 1913 when the strike began, the men and their families were driven out of their homes, even if they owned them, since the houses were built on company land.⁶³ They moved to their tents near Ludlow and the railroad junction as a quarantine sign to incoming strike-breakers, and it was "very important for the unsanitary business within that they be removed." An intermittent war ensued with the gunmen coming down out of the hills and the strikers retaliating until a pitched battle on October 28th brought out the state militia. At first the strikers were cheered, as the Governor had promised to prevent the importation of gunmen and disarm both sides. All was peaceful for a week or two until the company discovered that the union leaders were not holding the men by force, and the workers as a whole would not come back without gaining their points. "Therefore the guns surrendered by the strikers were turned over to the new gunmen, and the protection of illegally imported strike-breakers began again. Began also the enrolling of Baldwin-Feltz [sic] gunmen in the Colorado militia Thence forward we have to lay aside and forget the distinction between the private gunmen of the mine owners, and the state militia of Colorado" The army, like the state, was the weapon of those with the economic power to use it.

62 Eastman slipped scarcely at all from highly emotional, yet objective reporting. At this point, however, he said: "When you hear a man talking about 'blood-thirsty foreigners,' you can be perfectly sure there is one thing in his heart he would like to do, and that is drink the blood of those foreigners -- especially if he happens to be one of those hatchet-faced Yankees." He was undoubtedly feeling the immediate situation in a way which colored the universe.

63 Eastman cited as one example the fact that strikers were not allowed through the gates at one mine to get their mail because the United States postoffice was on private property.

The strikers asked the operators to confer and were refused. On November 26th, Belcher, one of the Baldwin-Felts men who had murdered Lippiat in August, was shot; and miners were indiscriminately rounded up and jailed, habeas corpus proceedings were disregarded and all rights for the strikers disappeared. As Eastman said: "The State and organized capital were married together before the eyes of men so amiably and naturally that, except in retrospect, one hardly was able to be surprised."

On Sunday, April 19th, after weary months of misery, the Greek portion of the strikers led by Louis Tikas celebrated the Easter ceremonies with dances, songs and baseball. The next day, Major Hamrock called Tikas to turn over a striker who was actually not in the camp. After one attempt, Tikas finally met the major between the camps. While they were conferring, the militia formed around the camp, and the men among the strikers retreated to a nearby railroad cut. Suddenly, as Tikas ran back toward the camp, a signal of three bombs was given. At Lieutenant Linderfeldt's order, the militia opened fire. "It is incredible, but it is true that they trained their machine guns, not on the miners who had left their families but on their families in the tent colony itself."

Fleeing women and children were machine-gunned, while those who failed to escape huddled on the ground inside the riddled tents. All day the forty miners in the hills tried to fight the militia, and Tikas called vainly for reinforcements. "But the reinforcements came only to the militia, for they controlled the railroad, and in the evening, after a day's shooting, they took courage under their uniforms and crept into the tent-colony with cans of coal-oil, and set torches to the tents." Tikas, who had joined the men, was captured by the militia while returning to the camp, and immediately shot, apparently by an officer, possibly by Lieutenant Linderfelt, as Eastman suggested. The Coroner's jury brought in the

following verdict: "We find that [here follow twelve names of women and children] came to their death by asphixiation, or fire, or both, caused by the burning of the tents of the Ludlow Tent Colony, and that the fire on the tents was started by militia-men, under Major Hamrock and Lieutenant Linderfelt, or mine guards, or both."

For once, as Mother Jones said, the nation learned and the nation was horrified:⁶⁴

Is it a thing to regret or rejoice in that Civil War followed, that unions all over the state voted rifles and ammunition, that militia-men mutinied, that train-men refused to move reinforcements, that armed miners flocked into Trinidad, supplanted the government there, and with that town as a base, issued into the hills destroying. For once in this country, middle ground was abolished. Philanthropy burned up in rage. Charity could wipe up the blood. Mediation, Legislation, Social-Consciousness expired like memories of a foolish age. And once again, since the days in Paris of '71, an army of the working class fought the military to a shivering standstill, and let them beg for truce. It would have been a sad world had that not happened.

The "war" resulted in the death of between one hundred and fifty and two hundred men, women and children and the destruction of over three hundred thousand dollars worth of property. After surveying the ashes of the colony and the ruins of the mines in the hills, Eastman concluded: "It is no retribution, it is no remedy, but it proves that the power and the courage of action is here."

Sloan, in addition to his cover, drew a sketch of a huge soldier looking down at a fat capitalist giving him directions. In the accompanying citation, one hundred and twenty members of the Colorado National Guard were honored as the "Order of Patriotic Mutineers" for refusing in Denver to entrain for Trinidad. The citation was signed by "The Civilized

64 V. 8 (June, 1914).

World."⁶⁵ On the opposite page, over the caption "The Real Insult to the Flag," Morris Pancoast drew the militia firing into the burning tents with a foreground of sprawled figures and a wounded woman sinking to the earth. Young contributed a sketch of Wilson on his knees before John D. Rockefeller, Jr. at 26 Broadway. Rockefeller wore a robe decorated with dollar signs, was crowned with a money bag and held a Bible in reference to his famous Sunday School class. He pointed to the exit as Wilson submitted a petition: "Please end the Colorado strike." Beneath were the pointed words "Petitioning the King."⁶⁶ Senator Elihu Root's patriotic words on the death of soldiers at Vera Cruz were contrasted with his silence about Ludlow, of which he had learned at approximately the same time. "But this did not stimulate the glands of his oratory at all," said the Masses, "because here the justification was quite obviously adequate. There was money in it."⁶⁷

Among its opponents, the magazine accepted the army, patriotic America, the Rockefellers, the President and the Senate. Actually, of course, all of these were one as the Masses saw it, and John D. Rockefeller, Jr. was only the symbol of an economic system so unjust that revolution alone could halt the power of the oppressor. No deed seemed to the Masses more pitifully to illustrate the inadequacy of patchwork legal reforms than the brutality of Ludlow, and the editors used every ounce of their strength to drive the lesson home.

The Sloan cover for the next month showed the bloody-handed figure

⁶⁵ V, 7 (June, 1914).

⁶⁶ Ibid., 8.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 17

of John D. Rockefeller, Jr. at a washbasin, initialed Bible spilled on the floor. The figure twisted, dropped brush and soap to stare at the massive, barred door which split along both edges to admit clenched fists. Done in black and white, the blood-red hands, the red fingerprints on the towel, gave point to the title of the picture: "Caught Red-Handed." Inside the covers, Stuart Davis also attacked the owners, whose representative was seen before a mirror outfitting a series of brutal-faced thugs in the khaki and campaign hats of the militia by which they attained "The Dignity of the Uniform."⁶⁸

Eastman's article, "The Nice People of Trinidad,"⁶⁹ was part of a deliberate experiment by the editor to discover the effectiveness of the split in society under crisis when a choice was forced upon the middle class. In company with a reporter from The Independent, Eastman interviewed women from both sides of the conflict. He tried the men, but the strikers were in arms in the hills, and at an interview with a mine manager, he was told of "the humane efforts of the companies to conduct the strike fairly and without aggression upon their side, whatever indiscretions might be committed by the miners." As Eastman concluded: "I had just come up from the black acre at Ludlow, where I had counted twenty-one bullet holes in one wash-tub, and yet when that Snodgrass assured me that there had been no firing on the tent-colony at all I was within a breath of believing him . . . the men behaved as men of the world have learned to behave under the eyes of the press."

It was emphatically not so among the women. The "nice" women of

⁶⁸ V, 12-13 (July, 1914).

⁶⁹ Ibid., 5-9. Succeeding undocumented quotations are from this story.

Trinidad, led in virulence by the wife of the Presbyterian minister, were so vindictive against the strikers that Eastman could scarcely believe his own carefully written notes.⁷⁰ Those participating were named, and their relationship to the management of the mines established. They accused the strikers of being led by outside agitators, of squandering their money, of being forced to strike by the union, of low character, of being foreign, of ignorance, of brutality, or irreligious stupidity. Perhaps the worst of all the attacks came from the minister's wife, who was quoted as saying: "They ought to have shot Tikas to start with. That's the whole trouble. It's a pity they didn't get him first instead of last. You know there is a general belief around here that those women and children were put in that hole and sealed up on purpose because they were a drain on the union." To the women, the militiamen were sympathetic characters who were being maligned by sensational newspapers. When asked for a solution to the problem, the final word of the wife of the supervisor of the coal railroad was: "Kill 'em off -- that's all."

Sadder and wiser, Eastman returned to the miner's wives, whose testimony he had inclined to believe exaggerated. Story after story followed from those who had lived in the tents and come out alive. The most telling narrative was that of a woman who, although on the verge of giving birth to a child, ran with her other children through the flying bullets across the prairie to shelter. Eastman described a young Italian mother who had lost her children in the fire as "sweet, strong, slender-

70 He wrote: "And they furnished it [the evidence] with such happy volubility to our sympathetic ears, and note-books, that I feel no hesitation in reproducing their words exactly as I copied them there." The entire story must be read to get the cumulative feeling of concentrated hatred.

fingered exquisite Italian Mother-of-God! If there is more fineness or more tenderness in the world than dwells in those now pitifully vague and wandering eyes, I have lived without finding it." The last contrasting word came from a woman whose husband had been caught by the soldiers and murdered in cold blood: "Revenge?" she said, "Revenge? We might go out there and stay five years to get revenge, but it would never get us back what we lost. It would only be that much on our own heads."⁷¹

Max Eastman found the key to the attitude of the "nice" women in their description of the strikers as "cattle," and when he summarized his conclusions as to true causes, he wrote:⁷²

It would be both futile and foolish, I suppose, to pretend that there is hatred, ignorant hatred of dwarfed and silly minds, only upon the "capital" side of this struggle. Yet I must record my true conviction, that the purpose to shoot, slaughter, and burn at Ludlow was absolutely deliberate and avowed in the mines and the camps of the militia; that it was an inevitable outcome of the temper of contemptuous race and class-hatred, the righteous indignation of the slave-driver, with which these mine-owners met the struggle of their men for freedom; and that upon the strikers' side is to be found both more of the gentleness and more of the understanding that are supposed to be fruits of civilization, than upon the mine-owners'. It will be granted, perhaps, even by those who love it, that our system of business competition tends to select for success characters with a fair admixture of cruel complaisance, and that those excessively weighted with human love or humility gravitate toward the bottom? At least if this is granted to begin with, it will be heartily confirmed by the facts for anyone who visits the people of Las Animas County.

No clearer reasons could be found for the Masses' stand against the social system. Their position was based both on Marxism and the American tradi-

⁷¹ The varied testimony before the Walsh Commission supported Max Eastman's evidence on the striker's side of the question. Nowhere else, it seems, can be found the immediate opinions of the "nice" people. For the causes and provocation of the strike, see Conditions in the Coal Mines of Colorado, Subcommittee of the Committee of Mines and Mining, 63rd Congress, February 9, 10, 11, 12, 1914, Government Printing Office, Washington, 1914.

⁷² V. 13 (July, 1914).

tion of democratic liberty with a strong infusion, however little they admitted it, of the concept of righteousness to be found in Christianity. To these were added a passionate hatred of ugliness and injustice which is the very root of at least one major type of artistic intelligence. Never rigidly singling out economics as the sole motive for human behaviour, they mixed psychology and poetry with a host of other means of analysis to explain and belabor the system of industrial and finance capitalism as they found it operating in the United States of their day.⁷³

When the civil war in Colorado was ended by Federal troops sent by President Wilson, the Masses for a time turned the attack upon John D. Rockefeller, Jr. almost exclusively. The younger Rockefeller was called to testify before the Walsh Commission, and once again the Rockefeller name became the symbol of oppression. Although using this symbol to the full, Eastman felt it necessary to show, in connection with the hitherto cited opinion on anarchists, the dangers of taking the man for the thing. "Undoubtedly," he said, "the Rockefeller personality -- expressing to perfection the cold hypocrisy of Christian big business -- is a symbol of immense value in militant propaganda. Nobody in touch with reality can want to dispense with flagrant personalities as points of attack." But after all, the man was "a relatively weak and warm representative of the white-hearted tyranny of the whole capitalistic business The moment Rockefeller dies, his value as a bloody embodiment of the slave-

73 Max Eastman, who was kind enough to lend his file of hard-to-get Masses, only once suggested anything as to the treatment of the subject. This was to say: "I only hope you can convey something of the dreadful nature of the labor struggle of those days." The position of organized labor has improved so much that it is nearly impossible to go back except in so vivid a place as the magazine itself. Today, the struggle goes on, perhaps as violently at times, but with power more nearly balanced.

driving system is gone. Nothing stops but his heart."⁷⁴ The Masses nevertheless continued to use the Rockefeller name and semblance to attack the unjust trials of the strikers which followed quietly after the publicity of Ludlow was over.

In September, Art Young drew young John D. and his father peering out from behind a huge Bible. The younger man asked: "Has it blown over, Pop?"⁷⁵ When a Las Animas County grand jury indicted two hundred miners and not a single militiaman or guard, despite the deaths at Ludlow, K. R. Chamberlain showed a sneaking capitalist nudging a judge and saying: "We only got fourteen of them. Better go ahead and indict a couple of hundred more for murder."⁷⁶ In December the new governor of Colorado was quoted as saying: "I intend to do the things that will make progress, peace and prosperity possible here -- if not by pacific methods, by force."⁷⁷ This was interpreted by Eastman as an open declaration of war on the surviving miners. Young put the case powerfully in a drawing of two shooting stands filled with top-hatted men and surmounted by flags. Into the foreground rushed a long line of miners herded by the militia; the leaders were plunging into violent death; the caption was "The Sport of Kings."⁷⁸

In March, 1915, Chamberlain drew a vivid cartoon of a bowed miner leaning on a massive coffin and facing a wizened-faced Rockefeller, Sr. with a group of his heavy, well-dressed henchmen. The line beneath read: "Now We Will Talk," and the Masses added a note: "After refusing for

74 V. 5 (August, 1914).

75 V. 20 (September, 1914).

76 VI, 12-13 (November, 1914).

77 VI, 15 (December, 1914).

78 Ibid., 12-13.

twelve months to meet any person representing the striking miners, the Rockefeller interests -- now that the miners are all either murdered or whipped back into the mines -- graciously offer an interview to the strike leaders. 'I am sure we shall understand each other better,' said John D. Rockefeller, Jr., 'and our meeting will have an influence for good.'⁷⁹ The next month, the magazine welcomed John D. Rockefeller, Jr. as a new subscriber with a lesson designed to teach him that the Walsh Commission had not been appointed to serve capitalist interests and "allay" industrial unrest, but to investigate its causes.⁸⁰

The legal aftermath of the strike went on for months, and the Masses did not forget. When John Lawson, the popular and respected leader of the United Mine Workers, was convicted of murder and sentenced to life imprisonment as a result of the Colorado strike, Becker gave the new subscriber a jolt with a cartoon of him and his father in a church pew. The picture was headed "During the Prayer," and John D., Jr. was quoted as whispering behind his hand: "Well, Pa, we've got John Lawson out of the way!"⁸¹ Eastman explained the case as "a seal of infamy," and Charles Gray contributed the clinching remarks in a brief quotation from the reception of Lawson by his friends and well-wishers when he arrived in Denver from Trinidad:⁸²

Then a miner stepped up and seized his hand, saying, "It's a damn shame, John."

79 VI, 13 (March, 1915).

80 VI, 6 (April, 1915).

81 VI, 14-15 (June, 1915)

82 Ibid., 12.

Another asked what the union was likely to do. But Lawson seemed to have something else on his mind. At length he said:

"At the industrial relations commission's investigation in New York John D. Rockefeller, Jr., shook hands with me and remarked, 'I am sincere.' I wondered what he meant."

"Just stand around this way and smile a little," broke in a newspaper photographer.

"I am smiling," Lawson replied.

In July, Chamberlain's bloody cover featured a heap of severed heads and a file of workers being led to a guillotine whose controlling strings were held by frozen-faced caricatures of the Rockefellers.⁸³ The cartoon served as an introduction to the leading article by George Creel, "Rockefeller Law." Creel's article was a blazing indictment of the Rockefellers and their interests, of the press for its distorted coverage, and a revelation of facts concerning the Lawson case which had been carefully suppressed in the well-publicized trial. "Never at any time has any metropolitan daily printed the history of that indictment or acquainted people with details of the trial," said Creel. Lawson was convicted, not for murder, but for the responsibility for murder as president of the United Mine Workers. "If this be law," accused Creel, "then why is John D. Rockefeller, Jr. not on trial for his life For every Rockefeller mercenary who met with death, ten strikers have filled graves" He closed his article with a warning of future injustices to be added to the present: "Careless of the shame to a state, the debauching of justice, and the desperation of the working class in the United States, the world must be shown that the pious philanthropist of 26 Broadway has not been engaged in the business of crushing wretched toilers, but that he has been dealing with a lot of 'murderous agitators.' The press has attended to it."⁸⁴

⁸⁴ George Creel, who headed the great war publicity campaign for Woodrow Wilson (see Chapter VIII), had been a rebellious journalist in Colorado and had often enough campaigned with violence against injustice and "the interests," but this article was an exceptionally angry piece of journalism. It was not mentioned in Creel's autobiography, written in later and more conservative years.

No wonder there were doubts when George Creel went to Washington during the war to supervise, among other things, the handling of news by the press.

The Masses' final blow against the Rockefellers was a careful article on the first great public-relations expert, Ivy L. Lee, tracing his distortion of the Colorado case through a highly skilled, adequately financed campaign to change systematically the mass opinion of the Rockefellers. Herbert J. Seligmann, the author, drew directly on Lee's own description of his profession. The psychological campaign was summarized:⁸⁵

The German government offers the anomalous example of a despotic form of government and a contented people. Its success is due to the Kaiser who has got himself absolutely believed in by his people. The inference is clear. If the railroads and the coal operators can get themselves absolutely believed in by the people, success must come. To accomplish this belief railroads must use the phrases and symbols which lead mobs, they must employ leaders who can fertilize the imagination of crowds.

A series of pamphlets on Colorado was discussed, one of which went so far as to prove that no massacre of women and children had occurred at Ludlow. The article closed: "More systematic and perverse misrepresentation than Mr. Lee's campaign of publicity has rarely been spread in this country . . . In the service of his employer he enjoys believing evil of his opponents and then he publishes it. One wonders what Mr. Lee thinks of his ideals when he is alone."⁸⁶

⁸⁵ VI, 14 (August, 1915). Mr. Seligman drew this summary from a speech delivered to the American Railway Guild in New York. This, according to the author, was the major document submitted by Lee to John D. Rockefeller, Jr. to prove his qualifications to handle the public relations of the Rockefeller interests. See also Allan Nevins, John D. Rockefeller (New York, 1940), 2 vols. Nevins said, v. 2, 674, that Arthur Brisbane recommended Lee to Rockefeller. This objective study of the Rockefellers discussed the Ludlow affair in Chapter L, volume 2. Nevins inclined to distrust the rhetoric of the Industrial Commission without exonerating the younger Rockefeller from responsibility.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 14.

Starting in 1915 with the Rockefellers' employment of Ivy Lee to manage public relations and Mackenzie King to study better labor-management relations, there began a new phase in the labor struggle. Violence was by no means ended; but management, or capital as the Masses preferred to call it, became more cautious, less blatant and ruthless in public. A new generation of owners abandoned the policy of no concessions to labor. Every step remained a fight, but from this time on, steps were possible. The Masses could, perhaps, take little credit for so momentous a social change, although it played its extraordinary part; but nowhere outside of interminable fine print of the Walsh report was there a more dramatic story of exactly where unskilled and rebellious labor stood in the years just before American participation in World War I. The picture was not pleasant, but to understand the heritage and social progress of America, it was an indispensable record.⁸⁷

During 1914, the magazine managed to give some attention, chiefly through cartoons, to the Michigan copper strike at Calumet and the hop-pickers' strike at Wheatland, California. In 1915, the magazine featured Inez Haynes Gillmore's coverage of the hearings of the Walsh Commission in March and again in July. Eastman and Stuart Davis visited a strike at the Liebig Fertilizer Company and printed a cartoon and an article on the brutality of the guards. In July, the editors featured Anton Johannsen's story of the aftermath of the McNamara case which had resulted in the ar-

87 John D. Rockefeller, Jr.'s subscription to the Masses is a tempting, but slight piece of evidence. It shows nothing certain except that in one tremendously important instance, the magazine had the opportunity to help produce far-reaching effects. The Masses reached the significant man, and it packed power. For the effect of Ludlow, but not the magazine, on the Rockefellers, see Allan Nevins, John D. Rockefeller, and also John T. Flynn, God's Gold, The Story of Rockefeller and His Times (New York, 1932).

rest four years later of two men, Matthew Schmidt and David Caplan, on a charge of murder growing out of the case.

Late in 1915, the general labor situation was reviewed in a long article by Amos Pinchot, who had just come from the Standard Oil strike at Bayonne, New Jersey. Pinchot wished chiefly to point out the need for a change in tactics by labor. Strikers were losing battles because they neither wished to nor could compete with the violence of the employers. Unemployment increased the pressure (this was just before the big war boom which began in 1915). His analysis revolved around the change in the industrial system which had reduced freedom automatically for both capital and labor. As Carnegie said that he could no longer re-enter the steel business without the consent of the steel trust, so labor had no chance against the system without government control. Although this advice was opposed to the Masses' general trend toward direct rather than political action, Pinchot was in full agreement with the editor's distrust of reform. The fight needed to go on, he wrote, with all weapons, and especially a consciousness on the part of labor of larger goals than the remedying of immediate abuses. The aim of which labor needed to become conscious was the only hope for the future of society:⁸⁸

In the labor movement of today we find the main hope of democracy. It contains the real idealism of American life. Political parties are essentially selfish. Without fundamental principles, they are maintained chiefly to get offices for men

88 VII, 15 (October-November, 1915). It is not unlikely that the C. I. O. is very close in idea, and perhaps in actuality, to the Masses' dream of organization for the unskilled -- minus, of course, the socialist political triumph. It took a depression and a favorable government to make the organization possible, yet the magazine analyzed American labor as it was really going in at least one major aspect.

who use them to get office. Reform bodies are busy carrying on superficial movements that do little harm -- except to waste energy that might be usefully employed. They are generally trying to find some way to help the poor, without interfering with the special privileges of the rich. The church does not play a helpful part in the struggle for economic justice: its tendency is to sustain privilege. But the labor group stands out as the one organized body that is ready to make great sacrifices for a simple and righteous aspiration. Labor is immensely vital because it is fighting for humanity's basic needs and rights.

Given the addition of a militant and dramatic support of specific labor cases, this was much the general attitude of the Masses. The editors always remained aware of the need to draw the line for the class-struggle, but the line was drawn in the interests of justice and a democracy "which is but another word for life itself," as Amos Pinchot said.

In addition to an attack on the illegal brutality of hired gunmen, guards and state militia, the Masses fought the threat to democracy and labor they saw in the organization of a State Constabulary in New York, a seriously considered plan early in 1915. While revealing the place of a constabulary in relation to the "system," the magazine took the opportunity to dispose of the serious and sincere reformer as an actual enemy. Just before the events at Ludlow for the issue of April, 1914, Sloan drew a cover of a mounted constable riding over bloody victims, a reminiscence of the Philadelphia street-car strike of 1910. The Pennsylvania organization was known throughout labor circles as the "Pennsylvania Cossacks," and there was no doubt that the men were at times used to suppress "strike disorders," which meant in effect suppressing labor's attempt to organize. Eastman pointed out that New York sponsors of the constabulary wanted it simply to provoke violence, the sure-fire way to defeat a strike when guns belonged to those who could pay for them. Constables were much more dangerous than mine guards, Eastman said. ". . . they are higher up from the ground," he wrote sardonically. "A man is human. A horse is

equine. But a man on a horse is cavalry. That's the difference."⁸⁹

When there was a proposal in 1915 by Seth Low, speaking as a citizen of Westchester County, that a New York State Constabulary be set up "to patrol the rural districts." Irvin Ray brought his guns to bear both on Low and his National Civic Federation. Ray traced not only a variety of anti-labor practices of the Federation, but showed that Low's request directly followed a strike by state laborers in Westchester County for pay which was due them. Gunmen shot up the workers, but were driven away by a sheriff who really wanted to protect the peace. In the clamor that followed, the State Engineer, rather than the strikers, was sent to jail, convicted of illegal practices.

The Masses, with Ludlow still vivid, attacked Seth Low as a representative of a bloody and oppressive system; and in the next issue, Eastman answered at length a letter from Rupert Hughes, who was a neighbor of Low's. Hughes' letter began from "an admirer of your incessantly interesting publication," and concluded with "let me compliment you again . . . on the many splendid things you are achieving." In between the compliments, Hughes told of a crime wave in Westchester County which had resulted from Italian laborers remaining there after a construction job was finished. There was, he said, no desire at all to create a body of Cossacks, but simply to protect women and children, including those among the law-abiding Italian laborers. As for Seth Low, he had done more for the poor and lowly than anyone. To Hughes it "seemed a pity that you should besmirch the purity of your own cause, by throwing dirt on everybody that happens to have money, without regard to the way he got it or the way he spends it He [Low] is a man of the simplest,

89 V, 6 (April, 1914).

kindest benignity. To pelt him with obloquy as an oppressor and murderer of poor workmen is the very sublimity of ludicrousness."⁹⁰

After lamenting the necessity of "swatting" friends in the eye when engaged in militant journalism in the interests of truth, Eastman belabored Hughes with the difference between reform and revolution applied especially to the respectable achievements of Seth Low. Agreeing that Low was probably all of the things Hughes had said, "probably to the depth of his soul a peacemaker, one of the children of God," the editor commented:⁹¹

Well, -- we are not. We find ourselves directly opposed in principle both to God as he functions in the religion of a ruling caste, and also to all of his children. We do not wish to make peace, and we do not count it a service "to the cause of humanity" to make peace between capital and labor at the current rate of exploitation. Peace between capital and labor at just that rate is the dearest wish of capital: it is the sole wish and purpose of the powers behind the Civic Federation. And exactly because of his Godchildish tendency to make peace for peace's sake, has Seth Low become the favored servant and representative of those powers. Doubtless he is altogether forthright and sincere about it; if he were not that, he would be a less favored servant.

Eastman pointed out that the miners had forced John Mitchell to withdraw from the Federation, and that it was Low himself who, at a meeting at the Colony Club to further the constabulary, had pointed out the additional merit of the police in "quelling riots at times of industrial warfare." Low was summed up as follows: "His impact upon society, from the standpoint of the fighting wage-worker, is altogether bad, and will be fought by the true lovers of liberty to the last trench." Irvin Ray added a note about the specific Westchester situation, advising Hughes to go down to the labor camps and get acquainted with "the hardest driven men of our day," and suggesting that a group of deputies responsible to the

⁹⁰ VI, 19 (February, 1915).

⁹¹ Ibid., 19.

sheriff and the community might better serve his purpose, since unlike a constabulary, such men were socially responsible for their acts within the specific community.⁹²

Rupert Hughes made little answer in March except to explain that he thought they were making grizzly bears out of teddy bears. Ray told him that he was simply shutting his eyes through lack of experience, that Hughes was comparable to Ray's own baby who threw half-dollars to an organ-grinder, unaware that they were not pennies. Sloan added a vicious cartoon of "A Recruit for the Constabulary" showing a massive brute being interviewed. He had not been born in the state, had been in prison, belonged to no union, had no family, had no relatives in the unions, and when asked if he had friends in any labor union replied that he had no friends -- "Good! I guess you'll pass O. K. -- Call Monday."⁹³ The Masses did not prevent the creation of a State Police in New York, but earlier and later labor history throughout the states showed that they were right as to the anti-labor use of the force, although by no means by necessity or in all cases. Certainly the police force had other functions than labor suppression. The same question of the control of the state was behind this protest as in the comments after Ludlow. If capital controlled the state absolutely, whether or not the idea of a constabulary was diabolical was beside the point. The organization would be used against labor if necessary as another brutal arm of the "system." As the Masses saw it, the same thing was exactly true of innocent and pious reformers like Seth Low. Only those men who were useful to the masters were raised to such positions of far-reaching importance.

92 Ibid., 19.

93 Ibid., 19.

The big labor news in 1916 concerned a series of battles of Steel Trust workers at Youngstown, at Pittsburgh and in the Mesabi Range of Minnesota. The pattern of each strike was roughly the same: low wages, war profits in industry, rising cost of living, a spontaneous strike, violence (supposedly by strikers, but strikers and their wives were almost the only victims), legal suppression as in Colorado and finally the end of the strike, hastened by the desertion of the skilled workers. Because of the labor shortage resulting in part from the cessation of immigration, the strikes were not as hopeless as they had been in previous years when strike-breakers from Europe could be imported. Usually, despite the defeat of organization, there were wage gains and some moderation in the post-strike treatment of workers because of the need to keep plants running at full blast to fill war-time orders. Frank Bohn, Arturo Giovannitti and Mary Heaton Vorse covered the strike news in a series of brilliantly documented stories. Two especially powerful cartoons came from these strikes: Becker's "Solidarity at Youngstown,"⁹⁴ and Robert Minor's "Pittsburgh."⁹⁵

The legal status of striking workers continued to be an important concern in 1916. Matthew A. Schmidt's speech to the court after his life sentence for murder was printed in March as a moving revelation of the helplessness of the laboring man against the courts. In September, N. H. Matson covered the beginning of the Mooney case with a story of an organization by the San Francisco Chamber of Commerce to raise a war chest and put an end to the stevedore's strike and the labor domination of the city.

⁹⁴ VIII, 8 (March, 1916).

⁹⁵ VIII, 21 (August, 1916).

A month later, Sara Bard Field wrote the story of "San Francisco and the Bomb." Before Mooney and his co-defendants had been located, the author showed that the bomb was "the missing link between what we, Big Business, wanted to do and how it is to be done," as the anti-labor capitalists seemed to her to think.⁹⁶ John Reed summarized the Billings trial for the December issue as based solely on "framed" evidence. "But what can you expect from citizens of a town which has been told every day by all the newspapers that a bomb will be thrown by Union Labor," he concluded, "and after the event, that it has been thrown by Union Labor?"⁹⁷ Reed thought American Labor was too strong to tolerate such injustice, but Mooney's freedom had to wait until 1939. The Masses recognized at the outset the arguments stated again and again through the years until Mooney and Billings were freed.

During 1917, American labor profited greatly from the decrease in man-power and the increase in manufacturing which resulted from the war. There was, as Mark Sullivan observed, "not demand by labor but furiously competitive up-bidding by employers"⁹⁸ The Masses turned its attention to the one remaining major labor struggle, that of the I. W. W. The questions were no longer simply industrial, but complicated by the issue of loyalty during war-time. In February, the

96 VIII, 16 (October, 1916). The famous labor "martyrs," Mooney and Billings, were arrested and convicted for the explosion of a bomb in a Preparedness Day parade. Although the legal case was complicated by patriotic issues, labor always insisted that the fundamental issues were concerned with labor, and that the two men were framed. Although the execution of both men was stayed, they were not freed for many years despite continuous agitation for their freedom.

97 IX, 16 (December, 1916).

98 Mark Sullivan, Our Times (New York, 1935), V, 484.

magazine printed Charles Ashleigh's description of "Everett's Bloody Sunday," with an appeal for funds to defend the hapless prisoners who had been thrown into jail after their unsuccessful attempt to land at Everett, Washington.⁹⁹ In September, the Masses protested the deportation in Arizona of some twelve-hundred alleged members of the I. W. W. from the Phelps-Dodge mines in an article comparing German kaiserdom to the absolutism of American despots.¹⁰⁰ In October, the lynching of I. W. W. organizer, Frank Little, at Butte was commemorated in a long, dramatic poem by Arturo Giovannitti, "When the Cock Crows."¹⁰¹

As the Masses ended publication in November-December, it devoted the lead article to "The Truth about the I. W. W.," by Harold Callender, the investigator of the Arizona deportations for the National Labor Defense Council. He analyzed the troubles in the mines at Bisbee, Arizona, in the great lumber strikes in the Northwest, in the copper mines at Butte

99 The I. W. W. had been barred from the town by a group of citizens. As was their custom in such "free speech" fights, men set out at once for Everett. In this case, they chartered boats and proposed to land from the sea. They were met at the docks by deputy sheriffs who fired on the vessels, a fire which was returned. When the boats returned to Portland, the I. W. W. members were immediately thrown in jail. Hatred of the labor organization was combined with patriotic feeling associated with the war in such a way that long after the organization had ceased to be a power, the very initials served as a "bogeyman" in the west.

100 The Masses had distinguished support on this issue. President Wilson telegraphed the Governor of Arizona: ". . . . Meantime may I not respectfully urge the great danger of citizens taking the law in their own hands as you report their having done. I look upon such action with grave apprehension." See Ray Stannard Baker, Woodrow Wilson (New York, 1939), VII, 160-1.

101 IX, 18-20 (October, 1917).

and on the farms of North Dakota. Everywhere, Callender noted a closer tie between the A. F. of L. and the I. W. W., between craft and industrial unions. As he saw it, and he quoted widely separate opinions to illustrate the truth of his vision, it was becoming more and more apparent that the I. W. W. had a real function to perform for all labor in the expression of revolutionary discontent. Ill-equipped to do the job of organizing except in the most general way, the older unions could provide the permanent structure after the I. W. W. had dramatized the need for solidarity among the unorganized. E. B. Ault, a labor leader of Seattle, was quoted as saying: "The Industrial Workers aren't primarily a union seeking better industrial conditions, they are revolutionists But the workers aren't in a revolutionary mood . . . perhaps I should say that we are engaged in a revolution, though of a more Fabian sort."¹⁰²

Callender's article was perceptive, but ironically, the very hope he held out for the I. W. W. was blasted before the article was published by the indictment at Chicago of over a hundred I. W. W. leaders for conspiracy against the government.¹⁰³ The magazine had never believed in the I. W. W. as the answer to the problems of labor in the United States.

102 X, 11 (November, December, 1917).

103 The two major studies of the I. W. W. are Paul F. Brissendon, The I. W. W., A Study in American Syndicalism (New York, 1919) and John S. Gambs, The Decline of the I. W. W. (New York, 1932). Gambs wrote: "An organization which sang in deep-throated tones songs of sardonic humor and savage mockery; which evolved a vituperative cant of its own; whose picket lines were a thousand miles long; whose tactics of battle in free-speech fights and in the harvest fields were unexpected and bold; which laughed with inimitable, grim humor -- such an organization cannot be completely understood unless some attention is given to its romantic side." (p. 14) This aspect intrigued the Masses' editors, as has been suggested, but by 1917 there was more grimness than humor.

The organization's valuable contribution throughout the years had been made through propaganda and the dramatic realization of class lines. By 1917, its importance to the Masses lay in the brutal suppression by which mutual enemies, including a war government, were eliminating any threat to their power. Both the magazine and the labor organization were under sentence of death.

Throughout its years of support of the workers, the Masses felt about the American Federation of Labor much the way it did about politicians of any sort. At best an organization which might be used by revolutionary labor for its own purposes; at worst the Federation was another subtle part of capital's deceptive power over the workers. Since both of these were somewhat tenuous possibilities, the magazine devoted little attention to the conventional organization of skilled workers. The highly skilled craftsmen were not "the masses," and were not a part of the crucial labor struggle. The A. F. of L., with its political policies of rewarding friends and punishing enemies, of organization on craft-union lines, of cooperation with such organizations as the National Civic Federation, was naturally under sharp attack through the history of the Masses. The tone was set by Eastman's coverage of the 1912 convention of the A. F. of L. in an article headed "Raisin' Hell in School." The main attack was levelled at Samuel Gompers: "The resemblance of Gompers to a school ma'am is not only physical, but there is the same manner, after the delegates get through reciting their lessons, of telling them whether they were right or wrong. There is the same sacrifice of the true aims of the institution to the necessity of maintaining school discipline and the authority of the teacher at every turn."¹⁰⁴ Disciplined regularity, as

104 IV, 18 (January, 1913).

sual with the Masses, came off second best in a discussion of tactics.

At the 1912 convention, Socialists and industrial unionists were ne. When they were defeated, Eastman concluded that the A. F. of L. fight well either disintegrate or be renewed under new leadership, but hat industrial unionism would come either inside or out of the Federa- tion: "And if they prevail outside [sic] of it, they will take out with them the fighting strength of the Federaion [sic]. An old carcass of rotten politics and officialdom will be all there is left of the American Federation of Labor in about three years if it sticks to its present pol- icies."¹⁰⁵ Eastman attacked Gompers primarily because of a hypocrisy which deluded the workers and kept them from realizing the full nature of the class struggle. He recognized that the A. F. of L. was working for class legislation, but he attacked the pious fraud implicit in the idea that when employers unite that is evil, but when the unions unite, that is humanitarian. As a believer in science and truth as well as the

105 The death and burial of the A. F. of L. was announced many times, yet it survived. Perlman and Taft in their History of Labor made clear why this was true. See especially the premises of 1897 (pp. 3-10) and the conclusions of 1926 (pp. 623-630). The middle-class psychology of the American worker was a commonplace, although this period saw a turning away toward socialism. Nathan Fine said in Farm and Labor Parties: "If it were not for the election of Woodrow Wilson in 1912, the outbreak of the World War and America's en- trance into it, with the hysteria and the post-war reaction, not even Gompers could have stopped the growth of socialism among the trade unionists of America." (259) There were too many "ifs" for this analysis to be very meaningful now, yet the conclusion was probably true. Perlman and the "Wisconsin School" of labor history take the dangerously narrow pragmatic position that because the A. F. of L. did survive, it was the only type of organization suited to the American scene. The success of the C. I. O. has made arguments somewhat academic by fulfilling part of the dreams of the industrial unionists.

class struggle, Eastman wanted the lines drawn truly.¹⁰⁶

In the next year, Helen Marot reported that at the Seattle convention the Socialists, who had put up a fight the year before, "lay down on the floor this year, and allowed the steamroller to pass quietly over them."¹⁰⁷ The only hope for industrial unionism she found was in the militant California Federation which had never been Socialist but had the fire of rebels even if deficient in theoretical ends. Whatever happened, the A. F. of L. had to change or be superseded if the Masses was right.

The final decision in the Danbury Hatters' Case, in which the Hatters' Union was fined triple damages for being in restraint of trade under the Sherman Anti-trust Law, evoked cries of rage and fear from Gompers; but Eastman was delighted that this might finally make clear the ineffective pretense of a policy which "denies the conflict of interest between labor and capital, bootlicks the capitalist parties at Washington, and begs for class legislation upon the pretense that it is not class legislation."¹⁰⁸ To Eastman, just laws in an unjust society were simply folly for the impotent masses or workers -- meaningless reforms. The A. F. of L., seeking labor gains in Washington, was completely

106 Gompers hated Socialism primarily because of its intellectual nature. He said: "I saw how professions of radicalism and sensationalism concentrated all the forces of organized society against a labor movement and nullified in advance normal, necessary activity I understood that to experiment with the labor movement was to experiment with human life." See Gompers, Seventy Years, I, 97-8. To the Masses group, not to experiment was to produce far worse human consequences.

107 V. 16 (January, 1914).

108 V. 22 (February, 1914).

detached from industrial realities which existed rather in the struggles of the workers to organize in such places as Paterson and Ludlow.

In sharp contrast to the usual Masses' attitude toward the Federation, Inez Haynes Gillmore covered the San Francisco convention of 1915 with attention to nothing but the positive impression of the power of labor. Calling her article "The A. F. of L. Convention: An Impression," she stressed the actual size and trained power of the delegates, their skill and their knowledge of the complexities of society, the fighting force which filled the convention hall. Gompers' control of the convention she discussed with bewildered appreciation of his abilities. He "Brought them back not to his but to their own control -- brought them back through sheer force of will, brain and personality power." Always behind the clamor of the convention, Gillmore seemed to see the ranks of millions of workers. "The voice of labor," she wrote, "is a roar, deep as though it came from a throat of iron, penetrating as though it came through lips of silver."¹⁰⁹ Her article was a romantic vision of the solidarity of labor.

Throughout 1916, Helen Marot wrote most of the labor news. She was no friend of the A. F. of L., and in discussing the organization of actors and teachers or of the needle trades, there was general praise for organization as such, a lament for the inadequacy of the established craft unions, and a sense of hope for the future. George P. West celebrated the success of the anthracite miners in negotiating an agreement and praised the United Mine Workers as the model American union. A. F. of L. or not, it was a militant industrial group. The self-imposed

109 VIII, 8 (February, 1916).

limitations of most of the established unions seemed bitterly wrong to the Masses' editors, so terribly aware of the dilemma of the unorganized. Both the caution and the self-righteousness of the A. F. of L. seemed thoroughly evil in terms of the truth about the labor struggle.

There is no way to estimate the effectiveness of the Masses' labor crusade. The facts upon which some very brilliant journalism was constructed were true, although not necessarily the conclusions; there were few other places for the worker's side of the labor struggle to be circulated; there was a wide-spread concern with industrial unrest. Louis Adamic summed up the period from 1911 to 1920: "It was a period of massacres, frame-ups, Red scares, mass arrests, judicial murders -- dirty doings, far worse than the acts of such characters as Alexander Berkman, Bill Haywood, the McNamaras, and the Centralia I. W. W. The latter, at least, were not perpetrated by the powerful against the weak, were not anti-social, brutal, brutalizing, inhuman in the motives behind them."¹¹⁰ Only a full-scale, and therefore forbiddingly unmanageable survey such as that made by the Commission on Industrial Relations, or the fiery, inspired journalism of the Masses group could do justice to conditions as they were, and convey to those not immediately concerned the nature of labor's struggle.

¹¹⁰ Adamic, Dynamite, 321.

CHAPTER IV

WOMEN'S REVOLUTION

They draw nude women for the Masses
Thick, fat, ungainly lasses --
How does that help the working classes?

During the early years of the Masses, an unidentified wag coined the above lines. The five Sloan nudes which gave a feminist versions of the story of a tiny Adam and a massive Eve in the issues for February and March of 1913 were the butt of the satire. The unknown humorist expressed wittily a serious problem which bothered contemporary and later critics of the magazine: can a publication devoted to social revolution pay attention to the universal problems of sex without extending itself to so general a position as to lose its revolutionary nature? The Masses set out to show not only that it could, but that it must.

In the years of publication of the magazine, women were in revolt against the social system as actively and more successfully than labor. In 1916, a group of feminist and suffragist leaders requested five dollars apiece from women readers as a New Year's tribute to the magazine. "In cartoon, in verse, in editorial, in story," their plea read, "THE MASSES has stood for us all along the line as no other magazine in America has. When we fight for suffrage, for economic freedom, for professional opportunities, for scientific sex knowledge, there stands THE MASSES, always

understanding, always helping."¹ The women felt that, correctly revolutionary or not, the magazine fought for them.

The editors were naturally glad to have the support of any group of readers, but they demonstrated over again in relation to the "woman" question the connection between liberty and the social struggle. If the aspirations of women were simply bourgeois, the Masses refused to consider them so. The consequences of a feminist victory over organized society seemed directly revolutionary, and the kinship between the struggle of labor and that for women's rights was demonstrably obvious. Even the conservative Samuel Gompers recorded that "Devotion to trade unionism leads to interest in movements for freedom in all relations of life; consequently I was early interested in the movement for equal suffrage."² So closely were the two battles linked in the thinking of the time that the University of Chicago published a learned monograph by Jessie Taft, a social scientist, to state "the women's side of what from the man's angle is called the labor movement." She wrote: "The real goal of both movements is a society whose consciousness shall have reached the social stage and hence is capable of dealing scientifically with social as well as physical problems, a society which no longer leaves the social forms and relationships whereby human impulses are expressed to chance or

1 VIII, 2 (February, 1916). The signers were: Alice Carpenter, Zona Gale, Marie Jenney Howe, Anna Strunsky Walling and Vira Boardman Whitehouse. A group of anti-suffragists resigned from the New City Club when their fellow-members offered such support to a revolutionary periodical. See the New York Times 11:3 (March 1, 1916) and 11:5 (March 2, 1916).

2 Gompers, Seventy Years, I, 480.

or physical force, but subjects them to rational control."³ A full contribution to scientific social change included both, whether or not dogmatic Socialism had come to this conclusion.

Only a part of the attempt to establish women's rights was concerned with the right to vote, and even on this rather narrow question, Eastman consistently adopted a broad scientific position. In establishing his editorial policies, he pointed out that the great socialist thinkers, Saint-Simon, Fourier, Marx and Engels, had grasped the importance of freeing women from subjection and that the Party had early made woman suffrage a part of its program. But using the example of the defeat of woman suffrage in Wisconsin despite the state's strong socialist movement, the editor claimed that "members of the Socialist party in America, on the whole, have been like every other group of sexually selfish men. None of them got up and actively went into the suffrage propaganda until after they saw that suffrage was coming, and they would soon have to be asking for women's votes."⁴ As in politics and labor relations, the Masses differentiated rigid theory and actual practice in the Socialist Party.

3 Jessie Taft, The Woman Movement from the Point of View of Social Consciousness (Chicago, 1916), 56. The dependence upon rationality, as compared with the various irrational explanations of the nature of man which followed the popularization of the psychology of the unconscious in the twenties, differentiated the Masses' approach to sex and the status of women as to other questions. The significance of this rationalism was considered by Frederick Hoffman, Freudianism and the Literary Mind (Baton Rouge, Louisiana, 1945). See especially 322-26.

4 IV, 5 (January, 1913). Rheta Childe Dorr, noted suffragist, observed in her autobiography, A Woman of Fifty (New York, 1924), that her experience with the Socialists both in Wisconsin and New York, had shown her that such "idealism" based on the class struggle only obscured the direct fight for votes as a legislative question. Most of the suffragist leaders agreed with this conception so directly parallel to Gompers' views on trade unionism and Socialism.

As in other vital matters, the magazine took a pragmatic position in relation to woman suffrage. Eastman wrote: "The question of sex equality, the economic, social, political independence of woman stands by itself, parallel and equal in importance to any other question of the day. The awakening and liberation of woman is a revolution in the very process of life. It is not an event in any class or an issue between classes. It is an issue for all humanity. It is not an event in history. It is an event in biology."⁵

So sweeping an editorial claim implied that the magazine would not reject the political suffragists as they had other reformers. The editors were tempted by the "militant" wing of the suffrage movement as by the I. W. W. and the direct actionists in the labor struggle. The Masses extended honor and respect to Emmeline and Christabel Pankhurst in their activities as the leaders of the direct English movement; yet Eastman, again avoiding dogma, clearly differentiated the Americans from their more violent English sisters. Becker showed a working class home with a child holding up a paper headed "Militancy" to her seamstress mother with the question "Mamma, what's this mean?" and suggested action as positive as a strike in her answer: "It means if we sit here like this, we'll sit here forever."⁶

5 Ibid., 5. Chamberlain, in V, 14 (August, 1914), satirized middle class women in a drawing of two matronly ladies, one of whom said pettishly: "I used to be interested in the suffrage movement, before it got mixed up with those labor agitators and socialists."

6 V, 9 (March, 1914). As with labor, the artists found it much more tempting to draw the drama of militancy. Obviously Haywood's response when questioned whether women should have the vote was a better subject for a cartoon than milder gradualism. Big Bill said: "Hell, yes, and they can have mine, too!" Editorially, the Masses completely disagreed with the leader of the I. W. W. in discussing suffrage.

Yet Eastman chose rather to write pragmatically of the American group: "They face a different problem, the problem of utilizing the votes of women in the nine suffrage States, in order to extend the principle throughout the country And so I regard the Suffrage problem in this country as essentially not a martial problem, but a problem of how to make success succeed a little faster than it ordinarily does."⁷ Unlike most other socialist publications, the Masses was always concerned with the instrument best suited to the native scene, whether or not it conflicted with cherished ideas valid in another context. Labor organization might demand direct action, but women suffrage was primarily a political problem.

Eastman had organized the Men's League for Women Suffrage in 1909 and remained an active suffrage orator. From this experience, he had advice to give the suffragists which harmonized with the expressed aims of the Masses' revolution "Towards Liberty." Statistical evidence, he wrote, made poor material for the propagandist. What was needed was to accept the opponent's main point, such as "a woman's place is in the home," and suggest a logical and psychologically attractive extension of the argument. "Such is the peculiar advantage that the propaganda of liberty has over all the evangelical enthusiasms," he said. "It does not at the first gasp ask a man to mortify his own spontaneous inclinations as the type and exemplar of angelic virtue, and demand that everybody else be like him."⁸ With woman's place in the home as a starting point, the propaganda of liberty demanded only the unique solution by each person

7 IV, 6 (April, 1913).

8 VII, 8 (October-November, 1915).

of his own needs. This analysis of the methods of propaganda went far to explain why the Masses proceeded lightly through satire as well as forcefully through direct emotion, and why a single monotonous revolutionary theme was rejected. The editor simply thought that evangelical narrowness would not work.

Always at its best when revealing a ridiculous or unjust opponent, a major part of the Masses' support of the suffragists was through satire directed at the opponents of votes for women. Cornelia Barns, in such brilliant drawings of vacuous young men as "United We Stand"⁹ and "Voters,"¹⁰ whipped the pretensions of callow masculinity. Sloan pictured a stolid farmer leaning against a cow and rejecting a suffragist canvasser with "No, miss, she ain't home -- but I kin tell you my wife don't need no vote." The one word caption was "Cattle."¹¹ After the 1916 elections, when two states had rejected suffrage, Becker drew a sketch of a group of brutal-faced ward-healers sitting around a saloon. The central figure gloated "They ain't our equals yet."¹² Such cartoons stood out against the popular drawings of foolish and unwomanly suffragists. Satire has always been an easier weapon to use against new ideas which would change the familiar "commonsense" of the status quo. The Masses effectively turned satire against the conservatives.

The combined issue of October-November, 1915 was officially labelled "Woman's Citizenship Number," and carried a variety of cartoons,

9 V, 16 (March, 1914).

10 VII, 4 (December, 1915).

11 IV, 17 (April, 1913).

12 IX, 19 (January, 1917).

poems, stories and articles in support of the freedom of women. Floyd Dell, who was more generally feminist than suffragist, described his *Adventures in Anti-Land*.¹³ Dell visited the offices of the anti-suffrage headquarters in New York and came away with a handful of literature from which he discovered that because women bore children and had a menstrual period they were unfit to vote. It seemed, from the authorities cited, that women spent most of their time either hysterically deranged or at least irresponsible. Dell observed that this description of the nature of women was exactly parallel to the taboos of African witch-doctors. Mock-persuaded, he said: "Apparently they have persuaded me of too much, these pamphlets. They show not merely that woman isn't fit to vote, they give good reasons for believing that she isn't fit to live."¹³ And yet, as Dell wryly indicated, the anti-suffragists would persuade men that women should be cherished -- that a woman's place was in the home. In an accompanying cartoon by Glenn O. Coleman, a bedraggled woman sweeping her stoop on Hester Street while her bearded husband lounged in the doorway could only tell the suffragist canvasser: "You'll have to ask the head of the house -- I only do the work."¹⁴

When the suffrage movement was augmented by a militant group which set up separate headquarters as the Congressional Union in Washing-

13 VII, 6 (October-November, 1915).

14 *Ibid.*, 10. The extreme position of the anarchists was illustrated by Emma Goldman's response to the *Masses*' "Woman Citizenship" number. After lamenting the inoculation of the rival publication with the "vicious virus" of suffrage, she wrote: "Perhaps Mother Earth alone has any faith in women. Perhaps we alone believe women no longer need dolls; that women are capable and are ready to fight for freedom and revolution." As usual, the opinion was quoted in the *Masses*; VIII, 20 (January, 1916).

ton under the leadership of Alice Paul, the Masses heartily approved.¹⁵ After the United States was in the war, the militants picketed Wilson with banners, some of which quoted Wilson's words, yet were accused of being treasonable. Max Eastman linked the issue to liberty as the magazine saw it throughout its career, and welcomed the women who shared the magazine's spirit. He said that when beautiful phrases were applied too close to home then "you were on the danger line -- where all lovers of liberty belong, and where we are glad to see the militant suffragists taking a conspicuous place."¹⁶ Even if the magazine in 1917 was more concerned with Wilson as a militarist, Wilson the "Kaiser," than with votes for women or anything else, they recognized kindred courage to tell what they believed to be the truth when faced with injustice and overwhelming power.

Political equality for women was, in theory at least, a part of the socialist program; however, the Masses was concerned with woman suffrage as only a small, political phase of the larger question of feminism. Feminism comprehensively included democracy, liberty and economic freedom for women alike with men. Fundamentally, as the Masses' contributors saw it, women and men both needed to be freed from dogma applied to the relations of the sexes and especially the place of women in society. The truth about a woman was that she was a person, a human being with all

15 Rheta Dorr said in A Woman of Fifty, 283: "In effect Miss Paul said to me that it was idle to hope that a two-thirds majority in the House and Senate would ever be converted to woman suffrage What did matter was that the Democratic Party, after many lean years, was in office and over those majorities President Wilson exercised despotic power." This was the reason for the attack on Wilson. For the suffrage campaign, see Elizabeth Cady Stanton et. al., The History of Woman Suffrage, 5 vols. (New York, 1922).

16 IX, 42 (August, 1917).

of the needs of a human being. Fundamental physical differences might alter the terms of the needs of women and men, but in the need for individual fulfillment, both shared a social problem. An anonymous contributor, probably Floyd Dell, illustrated the position with the story of a man who became dissatisfied simply to work, who wanted also to live and become a human being. After years of marriage, he ultimately found out that his wife had the same needs, that on the day he discovered the inadequacy of his own life, his wife had written in her diary: "I did not deliberately decide to spend the rest of my life sitting in a house and taking care of children. It just happened to me." The unfairness of the woman's sheltered and monotonous tasks without rights of freedom or wages suddenly became vividly clear. "She took care of an individual's children and looked after an individual's meals. But she herself wasn't an individual. She wasn't a free human being," wrote Dell. "So it was that I became a feminist."¹⁷

One method of connecting women's freedom with the economic struggle of the masses was illustrated by Upton Sinclair, who contributed a parable which reflected the economic basis of sex relationships:¹⁸

Once upon a time a Man married a Woman.

Time passed and one day the Man said: "I love all women. I need a great deal of love."

And the Woman replied: "I love all men. I also need a great deal of love."

17 V, 8 (March, 1914). The story of Floyd Dell's development as a feminist was the center of his autobiography, Homecoming. A delightful account of his and others experiments in living while in Greenwich Village appeared in Love in Greenwich Village (New York, 1926). A more serious study of Dell's was Love in the Machine Age (New York, 1930).

18 IV, 7 (August, 1913).

Said the Man: "If you talk like that, I will hit you over the head with a club."

And the Woman said: "Forgive me, Lord and Master."

Ten thousand years passed, and again the Man said: "I love all women. I need a great deal of love."

And the Woman replied: "I love all men. I also need a great deal of love."

Said the Man: "If you talk like that, I will divorce you and you will find it hard to earn your own living."

And the woman said: "You are a brute."

Another hundred years passed, and again the Man said: "I love all women. I need a great deal of love."

And the Woman replied: "I love all men. I also need a great deal of love. And, as you know, I can earn my own living."

Said the Man: "If you talk like that, I shall have to be-have myself."

And the Woman said: "At last!"

Since women were increasingly free to work and on all levels were being drawn into business and industry, the simplifications of this parable were scarcely adequate as applied to wage-workers. Once working, women became, as the magazine saw it, even more unfortunate slaves than men. An important theme of the Masses was the economic destruction of women by the system whether they went into the mills or stayed at home. To illustrate, Chamberlain sketched two capitalists riding in an automobile. One said: "Woman suffrage? I guess not! Women are too shifty. I'd just got my mills running to suit me, when every damn woman went on strike for shorter hours."¹⁹ Sloan did a back cover of a street scene with two young girls in the center: "Say Mamie, I heard Pa readin' in de paper how us minimums is a-goin' to git more wages!"²⁰ Young showed the Madame of a brothel and a mill owner talking together: "By the way, how much are you paying for girls now?"²¹ Reminiscent of the Triangle

19 V, 19 (December, 1913).

20 IV, 20 (May, 1913).

21 VI, 18 (December, 1914).

fire, H. J. Glintenkamp sketched three girls against the background of burned out tenements with a sign still displayed -- "Girls Wanted."²² Women were the cheapest commodity on the market if they were driven into the labor force.

Yet if women stayed at home, their condition was depicted as being at least as bad. George Bellows drew a woman sprawled on an icy street while her husband said: "By God, Maria! I believe we've busted this umbrella."²³ Another Bellows drawing showed a teeming slum street over the comment "Why don't they go to the Country for a Vacation?"²⁴ W. J. Enright sketched a drunken workman threatening his terrified wife and child with a bottle over the caption "Incompatibility of Temperament."²⁵ Young connected women with the war in a vicious two-page cartoon of a capitalist facing a lovely girl across a cradle and spitting out the one word "Breed."²⁶ Even Young's famous "cool sewer" cartoon was a sly comment on the domestic life of the worker. The ham-handed man slumped in a chair said: "'I gorry, I'm tired." His harassed wife replied: "YOU'RE tired! Here I be a-standin' over a hot stove all day, an' you wurkin' in a nice cool sewer!"²⁷ Again and again the magazine

22 VIII, 9 (February, 1916).

23 V, 7 (April, 1914).

24 IV, 4 (August, 1913).

25 VI, 16 (October, 1914). A note referred the cartoon to the narrow divorce laws of New York State.

26 VIII, 14-15 (December, 1915).

27 IV, 15 (May, 1913). It will be apparent that feminist issues had a special appeal to the cartoonists. This was also true of the poets and writers of fiction, as will be seen.

stressed the dual antagonists of poverty and inequality. Sometimes poverty destroyed man and wife together; often enough the woman suffered the most from a system in which her subjection was a part.

Floyd Dell traced the opposition to the freedom of women to a cult of masculine superiority which was fostered and used by the rulers. The causes were economic, but the results were far-reaching. He wrote of women's freedom to earn a living: "Capitalism will not like that. Capitalism does not want free men. It wants men with wives and children who are dependent on them for support." Yet to Dell, this was by no means the worst aspect of the subjection of women. He found that men liked sweethearts better than wives and discovered the reason in the nature of married life. "When you have got a woman in a box," he wrote, "and you pay rent on the box, her relationship to you insensibly changes character. It loses the fine excitement of democracy. It ceases to be companionship, for companionship is only possible in a democracy."²⁸ Threatened by a capitalist code of morals, women became drudges, and men became slaves or scoundrels. In either way, they lost their liberty, their freedom to become fully human.

Attention to general individual needs especially marked the writers. While the artists revealed the worst aspects of an un-feminist world, the poets (chiefly women in this case) and the story writers were busy showing the emotional needs of women, workers or not. Much of the feeblest poetry in the magazine fell into this classification, but the demand for recognition of women's emotional and intellectual life was so omnipresent that the magazine was flooded with manuscripts. Most of the

28 "Feminism for Men," V, 20 (July, 1917).

bad ones and some of the good ones dealt with freedom in love, especially sexual love, but the wider spirit of the poetic renaissance touched many young poets with the urge to express the general yearning for a better and fuller life which marked the feminist movement. Jean Starr Untermeyer wrote:²⁹

I will not be like the unaspiring hills,
Whence the sour clay is taken,
To be moulded by the shape-loving fingers of Man
Into vases and cups of an old pattern

But I will be my own creator,
Dragging myself from the clinging mud,
And mould myself into fresh and lovelier shapes
To celebrate my passion for Beauty.

So far as the Masses group was concerned, they wanted all women to create Beauty and Truth. Love and nature and children had as much claim to fulfillment for the individual woman as career and politics and the public life of society. The dearth of either kind of satisfaction proved the bitter need to revolutionize society.

The Masses, unlike purely doctrinaire feminists, did not equate feminine freedom solely with the right to business equality with men. The editors recognized the central importance of family and children to women and to society. Because of the editors' scientific interest, the biological function of women was of great importance, and they devoted a good deal of attention to the children which meant the future of the race. The child's position in an economically unjust society was illustrated at its worst level in child labor. In a mock newspaper release, E. J. Randall, aged ten, a cotton worker, deprecated the anti-Wilson attitude of some of his fellow workers. "While I have long been in favor of a law which would make it possible for me to discontinue my attendance here and

29 VIII, 20 (October, 1916).

complete my life," he said, "I feel sure that Mr. Wilson is right in saying we must do nothing to interfere with the doctrine of States' Rights, which I have always heard highly spoken of . . . whether Mr. Wilson does anything for us or not, we can at least be sure of his heartfelt sympathy."³⁰ Chamberlain sketched a graveyard under the great seal of Alabama with a forlorn woman kneeling before the headboards of child mill workers aged six to nine. The caption read "Rest Indeed."³¹ Young's mill owner spoke to a mother with a child on her lap: "Mrs. Crumb, I have called to assist you. We have just installed machinery that no longer necessitates your husband's services in the factory. These machines can be manipulated by three-year-old babies, and I am willing to give your child a chance."³²

Closer at hand for the artists was the environmental effect of a city, especially on the masses. George Bellows' "Splinter Beach" was a graphic display of city boys swimming off the docks. Alice Winter's sentimentalized children made an effective point on a most unsentimentally tiny fire-escape playground. Sloan's cover labeled "Innocent Girlish Prattle -- Plus Environment" showed two sweet-looking adolescents walking down a carefully observed city street. The younger of the two said: "What! Him? The Little -- -- -- --! He's worse'n she is, the -- -- --!"³³

From the representation of the effect of city environment on

30 IV, 12 (March, 1913).

31 V, 11 (October, 1913).

32 V, 9 (April, 1913).

33 V, 1 (November, 1913).

children, it was an easy step to the consideration of the schools. Under the leadership of John Dewey and Superintendent Wirt of the Gary, Indiana schools, education was taking on a new vitality and interest in experiment and change. It seemed to the Masses' editors (Dell was especially interested) that the problems of children and education could be solved in part without a revolution of society because the bourgeois had discovered that a school system which produced better people was incidentally cheaper to operate, at least on the "Gary Plan" basis. From better human beings, revolution was to be expected since they would demand a better world for themselves.

One obvious point of attack, even in bringing about the Gary Plan improvements, was the school board. Dell traced the relatively recent development of organized school systems in the United States in an article designed to show that the teaching profession had advanced from a refuge of the aged and disabled to a position with permanent status, but that the control of schools was still in the hands of out-moded boards of education drawn from among the ministers, bankers, lawyers and businessmen. These "gifted amateurs," who once had been the only men in a community to have experience with education, were now outdated. They presumed so much upon the "dignity" of their position in New York as to make flat decisions about married teachers, and discipline any teacher who protested in public.³⁴

³⁴ VI, 11 (March, 1915). Dell's articles on education were a reflection of the general hopefulness of the Liberal Club, where Greenwich Village met the uptown intellectual rebels from Morningside Heights. His rebellious objectives, however, did not stop with the schools, but extended to the freeing of women and children in a new society.

In a later article, Dell traced his own educational experience, with its complete severance from the life of every-day practice and observation, to reveal the re-education in living he had bitterly gained after leaving high school. The aim of education, as Dell saw it, was the production of all-around human beings who had learned something about the world through a school which was a part of the world. As he pointed out, the making of real people in his society was an impossible dream: "It would seem altogether improbable that anything so sensible should be generally done in our lifetime, except for the miraculous and hardly credible fact that in Gary the new system has been found to be cheaper than the old."³⁵ On this economic fact, the rebels and the conservatives would agree.

"It almost seems as though a real over-turning of an ancient and ridiculous institution could be quietly accomplished for economic reasons," Anthony Crone (Dell?) wrote in a review of Randolph Bourne's The Gary Schools.³⁶ This led directly to a revolutionary effect on children's minds. "The Gary System," Dell wrote, "seems to me part of a new conception of life which regards it as too precious for any of it to be wasted in tedium. Which is in itself a revolutionary idea. I cannot imagine a race of children brought up with that idea, growing up into quiet accep-

35 VIII, 10 (February, 1916). The remoteness from the mass struggle of the magazine's concern with schools was apparent in a note by Lucy Sprague Mitchell in VIII, 22 (June, 1916): "There must come to be a general understanding of the school as the community's greatest social instrument, so powerful and so vast that everyone interested in the community must perforce have a voice in its policies." For socialists, this was the heresy of the liberals who were more interested in "the people" than the working class. On the other hand, later "progressive educators" have failed to recognize the revolutionary significance so much a part of the awareness of the early theorists.

36 VIII, 29 (October, 1916).

tance of that paralysis of the will which passes as contemporary morality."³⁷ In much the same way, Whittier and Lowell had turned to the schools to free the minds of men from slavery. Dell's ideas differed chiefly in that they accepted the implicit assurance that the world was moving toward socialism, and that the freeing of any minds by anyone or any institution would give the true science an opportunity to work.

The Masses was not concerned with revolutionary cabals, but with finding the places in the flow of American development at which they could divert injustice into liberty and selfish stupidity into sane idealism -- which they equated with socialism. A growing change in the theory of education was just such a place. "The babies of this world," wrote Eastman, "suffer a good deal more from silly mothers than they do from sour milk. And any change in political forms, however superficial from the standpoint of economic justice, that will increase the breadth of experience, the sagacity, the humor, the energetic and active life-interest of mothers, can only be regarded as a profound historic revolution."³⁸ The welfare of children was one of the strongest weapons of the propagandist for liberty and the warm, human values; therefore, both John Dewey's educational philosophy and the Gary plan of school organization were revolutionary developments to be advocated whether or not the "bourgeoisie" also accepted them. Mary Heaton Vorse went so far as to conclude that all labor journalism was concerned with child and mother.

37 Ibid., 32. In later years, Dell made explicit the connection between the liberation of children and the revolution in a succession of articles in The Liberator on "Were You Ever a Child?" His thinking about education was also important to the autobiographical novel, Mooncalf. For all of his apparent liberalism, Dell always recognized an ultimately revolutionary objective.

38 VII, 9 (October-November, 1915).

"For when you come down to it," she said, "the labor movement is about children and about homes Sift things down, and all governments and all civilizations ultimately come back to this: Are we going to live in a world where we release the limitless energies and talents latent in mankind, or are we going to live in a world which stifles these gifts?"³⁹

The cause of labor unified for the Masses a multitude of new and revolutionary causes.

As a corollary to an interest in women's rights, feminine freedom and the development of children, the Masses inevitably dealt with questions of sex and marriage. To many readers of the magazine, such material applied to individuals rather than society and was not only unrevolutionary, but offensive. As many letters to the editor showed, even the emancipated left believed often enough that an interest in sex was simply prurience. At least as large a group gleefully accepted "The Sexual Revolution" as an important part of the realistic revolt against the "gentle Age" and the Puritanism which H. L. Mencken was to advertise so effectively at a later date. K. R. Chamberlain satirized the hushed era with a cartoon of three women in a glass jar labeled "Canned Innocence,"⁴⁰ and the Masses joined another campaign against distorted and suppressed truth.

The elementary freedom to treat sex as a part of life in literature was a part of the demand for liberty. The Masses opened its columns almost from the beginning to poetic expression of hitherto silent truths whenever they seemed to the editors to have merit as poetry. Helen Hoyt,

39 Vorse, Footnote to Folly, 404.

40 V, 19 (July, 1914).

for example, submitted a poem entitled "Comparison":⁴¹

How long and slim, and straight thou liest beside me.
Thy body is like the shaft of a strong pillar,
Or brawny tree-trunk; firm and round and hard.

Often thy fancy has likened me to a flower:
A tree art thou; so tall aloft, so rugged,
With branches proud, and roots that never swerve.

How frail I look next thee, and foolish fashioned!
And yet, I think I like my own self better:
What has thy body lovely as my breasts?

O thou art also beautiful, beloved;
Only I still do find thee unfamiliar:
Different from me: so strong, so strange --

So strange, my eyes will scarcely dare behold thee;
My hands draw back when they would reach to touch thee;
But for thy kisses I were half afraid.

In publishing such frankly individual expression, the magazine apparently felt no need for self-justification. As a part of the effort to see life truly, such material seemed revolutionary for all men and women who had been distorted by the social system. Most of all, free expression on sexual matters was a part of women's coming emancipation from society's shackles. The material of the fetters might be economic, but any revolt against society which produced freer minds was a blow against the "system." The idea marked the magazine's attitude toward all social change.

Even more directly to the point, the bourgeois oppressor with his conventional morality was linked as directly to Freudian repression of the individual as to Marxian suppression of the mass. This pairing did not become popular until Freudianism was better understood, but the root of the combination existed in the Masses group. "Many of the Villagers

⁴¹ VI, 16 (September, 1915). In its later years especially, the Masses printed much frank and intimate verse. For a discussion of the literature, see Chapter VII.

suggested that the secret of maladjustment lay in the institution of marriage," wrote Frederick Hoffman. "The American business man was universally held up as illustrating the effect of repression upon personal happiness. No American businessman could be both happy and wealthy at the same time."⁴² A good deal of rationalization unquestionably masked a desire for pleasure, and for the individual contributor to the Masses, the urge toward romantic revolt may have been the sole reason for contributing a particular work. Yet the product was set into an editorial framework which made the connections between individual and social revolution.⁴³

The story-tellers in prose chose for the most part to objectify their protests against the sexual inferiority of women through a romanticized version of the "fallen woman." Such literary treatment of society's outcasts had a long European history, and Theodore Dreiser's Sister Carrie and David Graham Phillips' Susan Lennox had opened the battle against the censorship of American works on the same subject. Again, the conflict seemed to the Masses to be between significant truth and suppression, with social and economic science thrust aside by reformers' platitudes and patchwork.

Under the influence of the muckrakers, the larger cities had conducted extensive and well-publicized investigations into "The Social

42 Hoffman, Freudianism and the Literary Mind, 6.

43 America was filled during these years with a general revolt of the younger generation which, although moving in the direction of social and economic revolution, had for the most part not reached the extreme of the Masses. See especially Van Wyck Brooks, America's Coming-of-Age (New York, 1915), Randolph Bourne, Untimely Papers (New York, 1919) and Bourne's The History of a Literary Radical with an introduction by Brooks. The Seven Arts, on which both were important figures, typified the leftward swing of individual and literary revolt. See also Margaret Anderson, My Thirty Year's War (New York, 1930) and Alfred Kreymborg, Troubadour, An Autobiography (New York, 1925).

Evil." The second report of the Committee of Fifteen, headed by E. R. A. Seligman, was submitted in New York in 1912. The report indicated a moral and legalistic approach to the universally intriguing problem of prostitution, and an almost complete evasion of social and economic causes. The influence of poverty was dismissed briefly: "Even where the children of the poor are not in immediate contact with professional vice, their surroundings are frequently highly inimical to virtue The problem is one of the most intricate with which society has to deal, since the incomes of the poor and the rents which they have to pay are almost entirely fixed by laws over which government has little control."⁴⁴ The committee concluded that prostitution must be driven out of homes, especially those of the poor, that segregation and regulation were ineffective and that the only answer was the stern repression of public manifestations and the reform of Raines Law hotels and the magistrate's courts.

The Masses agreed, as usual, with an attack on the courts, giving the prostitute the same support against unjust laws that it gave to other victims. Sloan contributed a drawing of "The Women's Night Court," which showed a young woman in tawdry finery facing a bearded, bald judge and a young man in civilian clothes, presumably a detective, who was giving evidence against her. Men sat and stood around the courtroom, watching the girl. The caption read, "Before Her Maker and Her Judge."⁴⁵ Untermeyer extended the interpretation of the legal suppression in a set of verses entitled "Cellmates," which Sloan illustrated with a drawing of

⁴⁴ Edwin R. A. Seligman, ed., The Social Evil (New York, 1912).

⁴⁵ IV, 10-11 (August, 1913).

an overstuffed Madam and a tearful young first-offender:⁴⁶

Don't worry now, an' things 'll be all right --
 Ye'll only see th' folks with happy faces --
 There'll be no more o' workin' noon an' 'night
 An' standin' up all day behind th' laces . . .

Here's the address -- now, don't ye lose it, dear;
 An' come right up -- don't stop to primp or tidy --
 Gee, but it's lucky that ye met me here . . .
 Let us go to sleep. Good-night, an' see ye Frid'y.

These contributions followed the magazine's usual realism more closely than such typical stories as John Reed's tale of a taxi-dancer who saw Europe and South America only to return joyfully to the familiar Haymarket,⁴⁷ and James Henle's celebration of the simple virtues in the heart of a prostitute in "Nobody's Sister."⁴⁸ Such stories of the kinship of the fallen to their socially superior fellows were a form of truth-telling, but for the most part too highly romantic and sentimental to point a realistic moral.

The Masses' serious analysis of the interest in prostitution stressed economics and rejected the passion for investigation. "It really isn't necessary to investigate vice," wrote Eastman, "All the investigation effects is to drain off the enthusiasm of those who might otherwise have been led to do something about it Investigation as a substitute for action -- that is a habit that ranks high among the credentials of hell."⁴⁹

46 V, 4 (May, 1914). The two cited stanzas are the last of eleven to the effect that "now, I've the swellest little flat uptown"

47 "Where the Heart is," IV, 8 (January, 1913).

48 VI, 10 (January, 1915). Dell said that the magazine was flooded with manuscripts about prostitutes and bums -- of which they somewhat reluctantly printed a few of the best. The sentimental attention to the "slum proletariat" seemed as false to them as to more orthodox socialist critics.

49 IV, 5 (May, 1913).

The editor found some hope in the propaganda for a national minimum wage law for women which resulted in part from studies of the social evil. This reform might indicate the proper economic culprit even if it did nothing about fundamental causes. For those who still did not know the true cause of prostitution, an Art Young cartoon entitled "Defeated" showed the bloodhound of commercial greed sniffing along a trail from a factory which ended with a girl's hat lying on a narrow neck of land stretching into the rippled sea of prostitution.⁵⁰ The magazine made connections which the sober report of the Committee of Fifteen had evaded through delicacy or a complete belief in the iron laws of classical economics.

If a frank treatment of prostitution violated a social taboo, a violently emotional story about a syphilitic prostitute submitted by Dr. Charles De Garis of the St. Louis City Hospital went even further. It told, with self-torturing bitterness, of the doctor's experience with a child of fourteen who had been born in a brothel, grown up there, and ultimately been put to work without any moral knowledge that what she did was wrong. Within a month or so, syphilis, described in full and nauseous detail, had hideously disfigured the girl's face. As she was removed to the venereal ward, she cried, "Oh please take it all away! Please let me have a good time some more." The doctor ended: "All down the long corridor I heard her as she wept until the scream of the stretcher wheels drowned her puling and her prayer."⁵¹ Although the dice were obviously loaded, there was no evasion and no pat moralizing for socialism or anything else. It took daring in 1913 to print an

50 Ibid., 10-11.

51 "She Never Left Home," IV, 13-14 (August, 1913).

article so ruthlessly in violation of the universal taboo against the mention of venereal disease. The revolutionary aims of the magazine were broad enough to include the publication of any important truth which others refused to tell.

Although far-reaching in social consequences, the problems of the control of prostitution and venereal disease did not, in those years, become as dramatically publicized as the more general issue of the dissemination of birth control information. The controversy, settled largely through the inertia of the defenders of laws widely and openly violated, was at its height in 1915 and 1916. The Masses quickly became one of the most effective propagandists for the advocates of limitation, and again surprised many of its readers by engaging in a fight which at first glance had little or no connection with a revolution by the masses, however true the arguments might be.

Eastman met the critic's questions by stressing both the contribution of scientific knowledge to the freeing of men's minds and the directly revolutionary consequences of a widely adopted practice of contraception. The connection between the evolution of the human mind and the control of instinctive processes by intelligence seemed entirely obvious to the editor; hence the opponents of birth control, he said, failed to recognize man's evolving nature and rejected science for a moralistic and authoritarian dogma.

Especially for socialist critics, he reviewed briefly the history of the European and English neo-Malthusian movements to show that from the beginning, the spread of contraceptive information had been connected with the relief of the working classes. The earlier explanation was simply that fewer workers would cause a rise in wages, hence help the

condition of the masses. Rejecting this utilitarian oversimplification based on the iron law of wages, Eastman applied revolutionary arguments to the situation of the American worker who, he said, needed not so much simply more wages as a better life in all of its aspects: "An unskilled worker is never free," he wrote, "but an unskilled worker with a large family of half-starving children cannot even fight for freedom. That for us is the connection between birth-control and the working-class struggle. Workingmen and women ought to be able to feed and rear the children they want -- that is the end we are seeking. But the way to that end is a fight; a measure of working-class independence is essential to that fight; and birth-control is a means to such independence."⁵²

Eastman soon agreed that the general question could be dismissed from the Masses when such respectable journals as The New Republic, Harper's Weekly, the New York Tribune and the New York American had "been giving the question publicity, and are probably making a great many more converts to it than we did." At the same time, he traced the beginning of wide publicity to the March, 1915 issue of the Masses. In that month the Masses had printed a lead story by Eastman under the title "Is the Truth Obscene?" which traced the history of William and Margaret Sanger from her attempts to publicize birth-control information through the New York Call, the publication of leaflets and The Woman

52 VI, 22 (July, 1915). In this issue, for example, George Creel lashed Rockefeller, Anton Johannsen traced the Matthew Schmidt case and Frank Tannenbaum muckraked a prison strike on Blackwell's Island. The connection of these stories seemed obvious to the editors.

Rebel⁵³ to her indictment for circulating obscene literature through the mail and his arrest on the evidence of a Comstock detective who posed as a socialist.⁵⁴ The article traced the probable causes of these foolish acts to capital's desire for cheap child labor, to the old tradition of tribal survival, to a male fear of women's freedom and to a morbid terror of truth; but the essential fact which emerged was that the almost universal diffusion of knowledge within the upper middle class was only prosecuted legally when an attempt was made to extend the information to the masses. Young drew a brilliant cartoon of brooding worries and fears shaped as weird animals, eyes and vague forms surrounding a bowed worker, his wife and three children in a "Hell on Earth."⁵⁵ Chamberlain added a jolt to conservative sensibilities in a drawing of the muffled figure of a woman with a child in her arms standing on the edge of the docks. The caption was sufficiently shocking: "Family Limitation -- Old Style."⁵⁶

53 In commenting on this magazine, Eastman clearly stated his disapproval of its attack on other feminists in a manner which he found extreme and rebellious for the sake of rebellion. "The entrenchments of custom and capital and privilege are so impregnable to our attacks -- they ignore us and we have no satisfaction," he wrote revealingly, "and so we turn upon our own weaker sisters and brothers who will recoil and fight back, and give us an exhaust for our emotions. It is the sad history of every crusade." V, 5 (May, 1914). Except for the anarchists, the Masses showed little trace of this error aside from an occasional sly comment on other radicals.

54 The detective persuaded Sanger, who was an architect, to dig up a leaflet from among his wife's papers (Mrs. Sanger had fled to Canada to finish her pamphlets before standing trial). When Sanger finally found a leaflet, he was arrested by Comstock himself who tried to find out the whereabouts of Mrs. Sanger and did his best, even to making the plea himself when Sanger was finally brought to court, to get Mr. Sanger to plead guilty to circulating obscenity. Dell, in his autobiography, said the police spy was a woman, but the Masses was probably right since Eastman had talked to Sanger before writing his article.

55 VI, 4 (March, 1915).

56 VI, 19 (May, 1915).

Over the caption "Congratulations!" the same artist drew a brilliant and sardonic cartoon of a top-hatted, corpulent race-suicide alarmist speaking to a miserable family which included a grandmother, haggard father and mother and seven children. The true cause again seemed to be economic.

Once the facts, as the Masses saw them, had been revealed and taken up by others, the magazine's campaign was, as in the labor cases, one against specific attempts to use the courts to persecute individuals. William Sanger was defended through publicity, raising money for his trial and printing columns of letters from all classes of people, including one or two giving lengthy expositions of the religious and moral opposition to birth control. One letter advocated the intellectual beauty of restraint from "the yearnings of uncontrolled passion." The editors gave the letter the heading "From a Disembodied Spirit." The letters added most of the pro-information arguments which the Masses had not included. A particularly brilliant exposition of the case for birth control came from a New Zealand woman and compared New York in the most unfavorable and specific terms to her native land, keeping class issues in the foreground.

When Sanger was convicted and sentenced to thirty days, Floyd Dell summed up the implications of the trial under the title "Criminals All," and described the efforts of Mrs. Sanger and others to distribute her pamphlets. "In the use of the mails to distribute this information," he wrote, "it is estimated that the law has been broken some 500,000 times since the Sanger arrest. That is what you might call efficiency." The fact showed that the law was unenforceable, and with his usual sharpness and effectiveness, Dell singled out for quotation the judge's words

to Sanger as reported in the press: "If you and your ilk would marry decent women, you would not have time to think of such worthless projects." This insult from the immunity of the bench was excellent propaganda for the magazine's attack on unjust laws and the system as represented by the bourgeois who interpreted them in their class interest. Inferring the typical middle class knowledge of contraceptives by both judge and prosecuting attorney, Dell said: "For a 'criminal' on the bench to talk solemn nonsense to a 'criminal' in the dock only makes the courts ridiculous."⁵⁷ Such ridiculousness, it was the Masses' function to expose by lighting up the real truth with fact or satire. Robert Minor made the point perfectly in a drawing of a fat, pompous, heavily mustached and be-spectacled caricature dragging a woman on the floor to a bench presided over by a judge with the face of a nut-cracker. The prosecutor, obviously Comstock, said: "Your Honor, this woman gave birth to a naked child."⁵⁸

When Emma Goldman was arrested for distributing birth control information publicly, the Masses defended her more seriously despite their dislike of anarchism, even printing in full her speech to the judge. Jessie Ashley, another deliberate law-breaker, summed up the legal history of the struggle in the issue for January, 1917. Mrs. Sanger had been dismissed (although she was then awaiting another trial for opening a clinic in Boston), and the other victims had with one exception been given light fines. The Masses fought for all of the radicals who were trying to reach the lower classes and took delight in pointing out that

57 VII, 21 (October-November, 1915). The unenforceability of the law fitted well into this particular "Women's Citizenship" number. Of course women could see through such glaring stupidities.

58 VI, 19 (September, 1915).

a rich girl, Rose Pastor Stokes, had openly given information at a huge meeting in Carnegie Hall without arrest, while poorer radicals like Ida Rauh and Emma Goldman were jailed for precisely the same act in less awesome places. The class lines of law enforcement clearly dictated the freeing of Mrs. Stokes and Mrs. Sanger, said the Masses, while similar acts committed by those closer to the working classes and without powerful and wealthy friends among the middle class liberals were punished.⁵⁹

The battle for toleration of birth control was nearly won, a negative victory since many of the laws remained on the books, but effective insofar as the Masses was interested. In this instance, the magazine campaigned for its friends and acquaintances in a battle with the New York courts. That it lifted the "free speech" and evolutionary science issues into a clear framework of working class revolution was typical of the magazine and marked its difference from the periodicals it helped to prod into action on the birth control issue.⁶⁰ As Marxian strategists suggested, good socialists joined with the bourgeois at any time a successful battle promised to help along the future ability of the proletariat to make a revolution.

59 VIII, 23 (August, 1916).

60 Hutchins Hapgood in A Victorian, 170, remarked that the European connection of birth control with the revolutionary labor movement was transferred by Mrs. Sanger to the respectable middle class in the United States. However, Mrs. Sanger pointed out in An Autobiography, 109, that she failed to interest the feminists and turned to the radicals "trusting they would appreciate the importance of family limitation in the kind of civilization towards which they were stumbling." Although Mrs. Sanger was middle class, it was such as Emma Goldman and the Masses who fought her early battles with her, and both stressed the fact that the middle class had the knowledge -- only the masses could really profit.

It was scarcely possible to print nude pictures, passionate poetry and pro-birth control arguments without coming to the attention of the agents of the New York Society for the Suppression of Vice.⁶¹ Anthony Comstock and his successor, John S. Sumner, were the principal prosecutors of the disseminators of birth control information. The letter column for one issue of the Masses was headed "Progress or Comstock?" Until 1916, when the self-appointed censor died, he was used as an occasional whipping boy for the magazine's attacks on the suppression of feminist truth. The letters which came to the editor asking for information about contraception were not answered by the magazine directly, but rather, as Dell recorded, turned carefully over to a private individual who would see that they were answered. Dell proudly accepted, as had Thoreau, the duty of civil disobedience. "I believed then, as I do now," he wrote in his autobiography, "that it is a moral duty to violate evil laws my lawbreaking was in accordance with the implicit oath which I had taken as a rebel against tyranny, it made America a little better, and it gained me only the approval of my conscience."⁶² Eastman pointed out the wider social implications when he indicated that the Masses was not only a pioneer in propaganda for scientific revolution, but

61 This private corporation existed under state laws and was empowered to enforce laws, make arrests and keep one-half of the fines imposed by the courts. The censorship of literature has made it particularly notorious. According to historian Dwight L. Dumond in Roosevelt to Roosevelt (New York, 1937), there were 3873 arrests and 2911 convictions under Comstock. Most of the censorship laws still exist, although they are enforced only occasionally. See Morris L. Ernst and William Seagle, To the Pure (New York, 1928) and Mary Ware Dennett, Who's Obscene? (New York, 1930).

62 Dell, Homecoming, 252-3.

statement "The Nude is Repulsive to This Man."⁶⁵ Minor followed his caricature of Comstock in the courtroom with another showing the same figure, now shirt-sleeved, with one foot on the breast of a huge upside-down nude, poised to chop down with an upraised sword -- "Oh, Wicked Flesh."⁶⁶ E. Gminska sketched a stylized "Nightmare of a Pure-Minded Censor after having reluctantly and purely as a matter of duty, attended a performance of the Russian Ballet."⁶⁷ C. E. S. Wood disposed of Comstockian modesty in a "Heavenly Discourse" in which a modest soul refused to enter heaven without clothes. When captured by Peter, he begged God and Jesus for even a small fig leaf to shield him from view, especially from the female angels:⁶⁸

GOD: Everybody is looking at you, you are making a spectacle of yourself. Who is looking at you?

SOUL: That lady angel.

GOD: Well, stand up and look at her. What's wrong about it?

SOUL: Oh, God!

GOD: What ideas have you got in your head anyhow?

SOUL: Please excuse me, God, but don't you really see how vile and indecent it is for souls to look at each other naked?

GOD: Here, Peter. We need people, but I can't stand this.
Take him to Hell.

When John S. Sumner succeeded Comstock, he was accepted by the Masses in the following terms: "Anything that Mr. Sumner does not like he can suppress. That is what it comes down to. It is to our minds a vicious, an immoral, an obscene fact. But it is a fact." Since the

⁶⁵ VI, 13 (June, 1915).

⁶⁶ VII, 20 (October-November, 1915).

⁶⁷ VIII, 17 (May, 1916).

⁶⁸ VIII, 29 (June, 1916).

magazine recognized facts, they proposed going in procession, all editors, each month to the censor's office where the contents of the next month's magazine would be read aloud for approval. "It is no more than just that having the powers of a censor he should also have the censor's burdens," they said, anticipating with solemn mirth that all other periodicals would follow the same course.⁶⁹ Used as they were to fighting the actual direct power of the courts and the entire social system, the Masses could not take the pettiness of Sumner and Comstock with the seriousness they recognized to be implicit in the existence of a censorship. When Art World published a conventional attack on Manet's picture, "Lunch on the Grass," accompanied by a reproduction, the Masses accused Sumner of writing the review, and pointed out that he had thus made himself liable to arrest! "Though under the law, we understand, a Vice Expert does not have to lock himself up as the possessor of a lewd, lascivious, filthy and obscene mind -- more's the pity."⁷⁰

Except for one misdeed, the magazine, by some miracle, managed to keep out of the toils of the Vice Censorship. Dell described the visit he received in person from John S. Sumner. The censor was snooping through the bookshop to find out whether or not they were selling, as advertised, copies of August Forel's The Sexual Question. He disapproved of this book, Sumner told Dell, because Forel expressed "approval" of homosexuals. Dell argued with Sumner about a technical term, and ended up in the wrong, but calling the self-righteous censor names in which "sneak" was the least offensive. It was no wonder that a Sumner detective

69 VIII, 16 (March, 1916).

70 IX, 42 (April, 1917).

returned, found Merrill Rogers in the store as business manager, and arrested him when he furnished a copy of the dreadful book. Rogers was in this way introduced to the Masses' office shortly after he left Harvard. He went free on bail, and the case was eventually dismissed by the grand jury, but the censor refused to return confiscated magazines bearing the offending advertising.

Intellectually, the Masses' campaign for the emancipation of women was successfully reconciled with revolutionary labor and a new world to be constructed on socialist principles. The same basic opponent, repressive capitalism, was continuously spotlighted, as were the courts which served as the magazine's most frequent specific enemy. Yet there was a significant difference between the single-hearted devotion to the working classes which marked duller socialist journals and the individualism which was especially apparent in the Masses' feminism. The editors tried always to keep in mind that the faceless "masses" were actually innumerable individuals, that the goal of social revolution remained the fullest possible life for those individuals and that the dogma and authoritarianism which marked conservatism was an ever-present danger as much to the "left" as the "right." Before women could become a part of any free society, whether socialist or capitalist, it was necessary to recognize in them the basic human needs which had been applied to men throughout the ages. The goal of a new society was freedom; women were fighting for freedom; ergo women were fighting for a new society. That the battle was by no means as apparently bloody and immediate as that of labor undoubtedly accounted for the use of satire instead of anger as a major weapon of the editors.

As at a later date no radical movement could ignore racial minorities, the Masses could not ignore the crusade for women's freedom during its brief years. The editors were in tune with the zeitgeist, firmly rooted in devotion to democracy rather than authoritarianism and at the same time pressing for an extension of the meaning of democracy into the modern industrial world. The major significance, perhaps, of their inclusion of feminism among major causes lay in their insistence that social aims must be harmonized with individual aims, that neither can be forgotten in any society which lays claim to the possession of liberty and freedom.

CHAPTER V

REVOLUTION AND ORGANIZED RELIGION

Although the struggle for women's rights reached a peak in the second decade of the twentieth century, conflict between religion and secularism has been a continuous part of the history of the United States. As the early years of the twentieth century showed, the rise of the social gospel, industrialism, and the labor movement raised new and vital issues in a predominantly religious America. With these new issues, the Masses, trying to represent the true interests of labor, was concerned in two ways: first, to reveal the supposed alliance of the organized churches with the interests of capital; and second, to show the perversion of true idealism in what the editors believed to be a distortion of Christianity. On the first issue, the editors attacked religious reformers, and on the second, they attempted to reinterpret the historical Jesus. Both were approached from the standpoint of ethical idealism originating in social rather than individual righteousness.

"Among these millions and their leaders we have encountered a spirit religious in its fervor and in its willingness to sacrifice for a cause held sacred," wrote Chairman Frank P. Walsh of the findings on industrial unrest. "And we earnestly submit that only in the light of this spirit can the aggressive propaganda of the discontented be understood and judged."¹ However evangelical the spirit, it had little to do with the organized churches of the United States, and the intellectual leaders of

1 Industrial Relations, 153.

the labor movement found traditional religion only an ill-fitting mask over the hated features of a familiar enemy. As the social gospel wished to transform the churches and direct religious thinking away from the individual and his salvation to the building of the Kingdom of God on earth, so the intellectual left wished to use religious energy and the power of faith outside the churches to create a new world of justice and liberty.

"For the first time in religious history," wrote Walter Rauschenbusch in 1908, "we have the possibility of so directing religious energy by scientific knowledge that a comprehensive and continuous reconstruction of social life in the name of God is within the bounds of human possibility."² Unlike the distinguished clergyman, the Masses despaired of progress through the church, yet throughout their attack on the church as the ally of repression ran the powerful forces of the social gospel rather than the nihilistic destruction of religion as "the opium of the people." The "Carpenter of Nazareth" was adopted as one builder of a true Kingdom on earth, and with the fervor and devotion of their Puritan forebears, the Masses' editors sought to create the New Jerusalem with the tools of instrumental science guided by the divine aspiration within man. No believers in an anthropomorphic God, they still escaped the lowest common denominator of earthly materialism by faith in the spiritual and intellectual striving personified in Jesus the working man, social agitator and lover of truth. To get results in traditionally religious America, two vulnerable spots were attacked within the churches. The church, said the Masses, is a Judas betraying both man and God.

The artists, ever in search of universally meaningful symbols with which to strike at capitalism, found natural material in religion.

2 Rauschenbusch, Christianity and the Social Crisis, 209.

The cross, the pulpit and the church building itself were all immediately understandable and effective subject-matter. Morris Hall Pancoast drew a "Design for a Pulpit" in which a clergyman was placed in a huge money-bag supported on the backs of the masses.³ Becker sketched a stock ticker with the tape running through the minister's outstretched hands as he exhorted his congregation to "Lay Up Treasures for Yourselves -- ."⁴ Sloan's well-fed congregation was addressed unctuously by a pious, surpliced clergyman, "THUS FRIENDS," he preached, "WE SEE THE MASSES FIRED WITH A VAGUE, UNCHRISTIAN SPIRIT OF DISCONTENT. THEY CRY OUT UPON WORK, BEWAILING THEIR DIVINELY APPOINTED LOT, FORGETFUL, MY BRETHREN, OF THE HEAVENLY LAW WHICH ORDAINS THAT ONLY THROUGH TOIL AND TRIBULATION, BY THE NARROW PATH OF SELF-DENIAL, MAY WE ENTER INTO THE HIGHER VALUES OF SPIRITUAL BLESSEDNESS. . . . LET US PRAY!"⁵ In a Stuart Davis cartoon, three hard-faced women gathered in front of a church door responded to churchly pieties: "That's right, girls. On Sunday the Cross -- on week-days the Double-cross."⁶ A less bitter but more typical response to religion by the laboring classes marked Young's sketch of an arm-waving gospel exhorter in the street with a pious congregation of six. Said the Preacher: "You must be born again!" Mike (tired of the struggle) "Once is enough, Doc!"⁷

Young was especially adept at using religion and the church to

3 V, 15 (August, 1914).

4 VIII, 6 (December, 1915).

5 V, 12-13 (December, 1913).

6 Ibid., 21.

7 VIII, 22 (June, 1916).

make his points against the system. In "A Compulsory Religion" he drew a great, bejeweled beast of an idol labeled "Mammon" with the personified fears of poverty, illness and the unknown driving in a mass of worshippers.⁸ He represented the clergy consistently as one of a group of subservient leaders of capitalist repression. A complicated cartoon showed a great roller "To Crush Organized Labor." A rapacious figure representing the National Association of Manufacturers was "Hooking Up the Leaders" -- a senator and a judge. The roller was drawn by a team prominently featuring a minister.⁹ An ironically effective use of symbols and caption distinguished "Nearer My God to Thee," a succinct drawing of a tiny church shouldered on either side by great skyscrapers.¹⁰

These cartoons voiced the major objections of labor and the socialists to the churches. Organized religion was accused of deliberately fostering submission to the favored upper classes in return for a later reward in heaven. The churches allegedly claimed that class-distinctions were a part of God's plan, and pretensions of brotherhood were hypocritical soothing-syrup. The church, in essence, was a dependent tool of the vested interests.¹¹

The writers of the Masses were more interested in replacing a dependence upon an anthropomorphic God with the divine inspiration in man than in attacking the church as an institution, although Will Herford, for example, disposed of the church in relation to capitalist exploitation

8 IV, 15 (December, 1912).

9 IV, 6 (September, 1913). A rare typographical error turned the caption into "Hooking Up the Lenders."

10 V, 17 (December, 1913).

11 See Dombrowski, Christian Socialism, 5-6.

with a parody of "The House that Jack Built":¹²

These are the Parsons shaven and shorn
Who tell the workers all forlorn
To pray for contentment night and morn
And to bear and suffer want and scorn
And be lowly and meek and humbly seek
For their just reward on the Heavenly shore,
But not on the earth that God made.

Clement Wood, parodying the idea of the Twenty-third Psalm in "A Psalm not of David," examined the reasons for a shepherd's attentions to his sheep, and concluded:¹³

If we are sheep, we will praise our Shepherd,
We will meekly bow to His will, accept His food and His drink,
And at the appointed time trot sheepishly to the shearing or
butchering.
If we are men, we will snatch His crook from the Shepherd's
hands,
And break it over His fleeing shoulders, and go on our way re-
joicing.

One of the longest poems the magazine printed was "Darkness before Dawn" by Gelett Burgess, sub-captioned "A Revolutionary Hymn to the Anthropomorphic God." Burgess stressed the long-suffering patience of man, and challenged God to one more effort to make things just a little worse:¹⁴

Lo, we are men! Our need hath sought Thee greedily,
But slack is Thy will, and we ask no more of Thee.
If Thou couldst bless, Thou wouldst have done it speedily;
Unafraid we tweak Thy beard, Thy master now are we.

If God, he continued, would only give men a little more agony, they would find their own salvation quickly and discard dead idols:

12 VIII, 18 (February, 1916).

13 V, 21 (June, 1914).

14 IV, 3 (June, 1913).

Sleep then, and dream, O God of ancient mysteries,
 Ended Thy sovereignty, the mockery of Thy plan;
 Locked be the volume of all Thy gory histories --
 The cross and crown achieved again, to grace the Son of Man!

Sleep, then, and dream; and let her slave Thou scorified
 Snatch up Thy majesty and wield it once again!
 Lo, Thou hast failed, but Man, Divinely glorified,
 He shall achieve alone the Brotherhood of Man.

The most brilliant satires which appeared in the magazine, the "Heavenly Dialogues" of Charles Erskine Scott Wood, revealed the remoteness of God, Jesus and Heaven from the false and irrational conventions of the Christian churches.¹⁵

Explaining the attacks on the church and the shift of attention to the aspiration of man, the magazine stated editorially that ". . . while we may sound grim and polemic, we are as idealistic, we are as much moved by the highest hope, we are as much concerned over the salvation of the world, as they. Only we believe that this hope can never be achieved, except through a method which takes account of the fact that men are what they are."¹⁶ A devotion to individual "righteousness" by the churches seemed to the editors a manifestation of deliberate hypocrisy.

Despite the condemnation of the institution of the church as a major opponent of the reconstruction of society, the Masses believed that the psychological force of faith and spirit were to be respected and used as one part of man's nature. "Never let any so-called Marxian," wrote Eastman, "tell you that the power of disinterested idealism is nothing,

15 The dialogues must be read as a whole to make their point. They have been reprinted in Penguin (now Signet) Books as Heavenly Discourse (New York, 1946).

16 IV, 5 (July, 1913).

or is negligible. Point to the life of Marx himself. All that his philosophy rejects is the alleged disinterestedness of those whose interests are really at stake. For instance," he continued, "there is a big spiritual force under the roof of the church, and as the power of the church declines we want to bring as much of that force our way as we can. We want to save up all the virtue that is being wasted in trying not to swear, and swing it into the channel of true revolutionary effort."¹⁷

As the Masses analyzed religion, the established churches were disintegrating for blindingly clear reasons. The destructive forces were more apparent in positive acts of the churches themselves than in any great feeling of the masses against the institution. When a conference of the Eastern division of the Protestant Episcopal Church was feted at a banquet in New York, Becker drew a scene filled with fat and prosperous bishops dining sumptuously below a life-sized crucifix.¹⁸ According to the magazine, the banquet cost \$20 a plate and a total of \$10,680. When a correspondent later corrected the figures to show that it was only \$5,353.89, the Masses answered sharply that the exact figure of Judas' price was unimportant. "Living in the leisure class luxury of an occidental money aristocracy," wrote Eastman of the clergymen, "accepting its standards in all matters of conduct in life, and yet fattening their emotions upon the extreme ethics of an oriental mystic, a poor man, an agitator, an anarchist -- that is the black rot and perversion of human character and judgment which stirred the cartoonist and the editors. That is what we had to say about the church."¹⁹

17 IV, 6 (May, 1913).

18 V, 4 (December, 1913).

19 V, 5 (April, 1914).

The same convention acted to oppose the control of child labor because children must be taught the honorableness of labor, and Eastman stressed the clear self-interest of the church. "For let there be no mistaking the church's motives in so fighting democracy," he wrote, "so fighting science, so defending privilege for fifteen hundred years against every menace of an awakening people. Its prime motive is and has been economic."²⁰ The immediate consequence of an increasingly clear awareness of the economic roots of righteousness would be the dissolving of the church for a clearer, saner, more scientific idealism. So the Masses believed, and the magazine tried its best to establish the truth and hasten the disintegration.

When the magazine was attacking Rockefeller, a correspondent wrote to them to ask why they were so out of date on religious thinking, so unaware of the success of the social gospel in the theological schools. The editors knew very well about the changes which had been made, but they believed the enlightened clergymen were, like Seth Low and the National Civic Federation on the labor front, simply "mediators" and "peacemakers" between the masses and the church -- that the church was simply trying to reform. They did not believe that the social gospellers could reform the church any more than the liberals could reform politics. The editors remained determined to transfer religious emotions to a program of human and scientific aspiration. The realities of the Episcopal convention simply seemed more powerful than the theories of Walter Rauschenbusch.

The ironic ambiguity of the connection between great wealth and

20 V, 5 (December, 1913).

and a religion of humility struck the Masses' editors as it did other commentators. "Divine Right" Baer, the Rockefellers and a host of other wealthy men were apparently genuinely pious and ardent supporters of the churches to which they belonged. These business men were not deliberate hypocrites. With their Protestant forebears, they drew their business and religious principles primarily from those parts of the Old Testament which approved religious devotion as a glorification of God in payment for success. The dilution of Christian benevolence typical of Franklin's doctrine of frugality gave New Testament reinforcement to the Puritan emphasis on sobriety, continence and Sabbath observance. The model of a Christian gentleman was identified by hard work, saving, no alcohol or adultery, the wearing of a somber suit to church each Sunday, money in the collection plate and above all a laissez-faire which left religion a matter between God and the individual.²¹ The successful religious businessman was bound to society only through the doctrine of stewardship, the belief that God had given power and money to favored children who held it in trust for God's work and could not be called to account by men.

The great city churches sanctioned and reflected this point of view by becoming increasingly dependent on wealthy parishioners, moving their property away from poorer districts and becoming resplendent and successful.²² Their publications and sermons gave support to the actions

21 See Frederick Lewis Allen, The Lords of Creation (New York, 1935) for analysis of the relationship of religion and the "robber barons."

22 See Schlesinger, The Rise of the City, especially 331-2. By the second decade of the twentieth century, the settlement house movement had begun a reversal of the general tendency of the churches away from the poorer sections, but this was not so much a return to the people as an attempt to mitigate the movement away.

of wealthy men. The Church Edifice Department of the Home Mission Department of the Baptist Church said of Rockefeller: "The oil trust was begun and carried on by Christian men. They were Baptists, and the objects and methods of the oil trust are praiseworthy."²³ When Rockefeller was under attack for his connection with the Colorado mine strikes, the Masses quoted from the "authoritative Baptist publication," the Watchman-Examiner: "We deeply sympathize with Mr. Rockefeller in the persecution to which he is being subjected. . . ." The Baptists offered unhesitating support of Rockefeller "if the facts have been revealed." The Masses commented succinctly: "In the light of the remarks quoted above, the conception of 'brotherhood' cherished by Rockefeller's Church becomes blindingly clear."²⁴

When the newspapers reported in 1916 that John D. Rockefeller, Jr. was willing to endow churches in the mining camps in Colorado "where adequate support and permanence of worship are assured," O. E. Cesare drew a brutal cartoon of bowed and sullen prisoners hunched in pews and held chained to their places while a top-hatted Rockefeller peered in the open door at the rear.²⁵ "He was not willing to give back any of the money, or any of the liberty, he had taken out of those towns," wrote Eastman in an accompanying article. "He was not even willing to talk about such matters with his serfs. He would not allow them to form unions, but he will give them churches Permanence of worship among his employees is permanence of peace and profit to him."²⁶ Eastman had no doubt that

23 This almost unbelievable non sequitur was quoted in Flynn, God's Gold, 296.

24 V, 15 (August, 1914). Italics were the Masses'.

25 VIII, 18-19 (June, 1916).

26 Ibid., 18.

Rockefeller was absolutely sincere, keeping the irreligious nature of his safeguards to profit firmly in his unconscious mind. The editor cited the testimony of Rockefeller before the Walsh Commission as so perfectly conventional as to be inconceivable as deliberate deception. "I gladly acknowledge," said the editor, "that he defends his self-interested despotism with those abstract ideals in entire childlike ignorance of what motives control him."²⁷

Nonetheless, the actual alliance of capitalism and religion was again illustrated by Rockefeller. "That churchdom as a whole is against the struggle of the lower classes toward liberty," Eastman wrote, "is against discontent, is against rebellion, is against the arrant assertion of human rights, is against clear thinking as well as heroic action toward a free and happy world -- that is our attitude. And to it we add the surmise that Jesus of Nazareth was more than half in favor of these things, and that the churches maintain their position by denying and betraying him whom they profess to believe divine."²⁸ The editor conceded that it just might be possible to use Rockefeller's sincerity to make him conscious of the truth, and he recognized a few free churches in which such a conversion had occurred.

Hope for the church and for John D. Rockefeller, Jr., however, did not last long. The activities of Billy Sunday, the revivalist, came forcibly to the attention of the magazine and again actions seemed more

27 Loc. cit. Eastman compared Rockefeller to Woodrow Wilson: "Woodrow Wilson is an astoundingly candid man. He always tells you everything that comes into his mind. But he is so delicately adjusted by nature that nothing ever comes into his mind except what he wants to tell you."

28 Loc. cit.

typical of religion than theoretic hopes. Sunday was having phenomenal success during the second decade, and two poets had isolated him for the Masses in 1915. Frederick Raper wrote a twenty-four line description of Sunday in action which ended with a satiric measure of the profit in evangelism:²⁹

The people were pleased with these elegant scenes
They yelled their approval and gave of their means,
They filled his hat full to the brim with their gold,
To hear the glad tidings that hell is not cold.

Raper's disgust with Sunday's antics was as nothing compared to the flaying alive of the evangelist in Carl Sandburg's masterpiece of invective, "To Billy Sunday," which was probably the most telling attack ever made on popular evangelism of the "hell-fire and damnation" school. In essence, Sandburg wrote:³⁰

I'm telling you this Jesus guy wouldn't stand for the
stuff you're handing out. Jesus played it different.
The bankers and corporation lawyers of Jerusalem
got their sluggers and murderers to go after
Jesus just because Jesus wouldn't play their game.
He didn't sit in with the big thieves.

Two of Charles Erskine Scott Wood's "Heavenly Dialogues" were devoted to Billy Sunday in Heaven. In addition to showing that Sunday was anathema to God and Jesus, Wood stressed the alliance between the evangelist and big business. In the first dialogue, Sunday was infuriated to discover in heaven a woman who sold her body. Jesus suggested that rather the men of wealth sold her body. Sunday said no, those men were his best

²⁹ VI, 13 (April, 1915).

³⁰ VI, 11 (September, 1915). The poem is well known under its later title, "Ode to a Contemporary Bunk-shooter." Sandburg was originally not generalizing. Sunday's success for twenty years was such as to dwarf any other American evangelist, even Aimee Semple McPherson.

friends: "They pay liberally to save souls and keep the people quiet. I teach the slaves to put their trust in God and hereafter, patiently submitting now. That was my great stunt. I was booked two years ahead when I cashed in."³¹

God sent Sunday to the heaven for African Medicine Men. Here he learned tom-tom technique and got the idea of converting heaven to Christianity in return for only the gate receipts of the last night. Before God approved, the revivalist wanted to talk to his friends Morgan, Harriman, Schwab and the two Johns to be sure the gate would be large enough. A disconcerted God ordered Michael to take him away. Michael: "Where?" God: "Anywhere. Where-ever he is, there will be Hell. I am very tired."³²

To clinch the connection between evangelical and revivalist religion and business, the magazine quoted from a New York newspaper:³³

We gather from a single column in the New York Sun the news that John D. Rockefeller, Jr., is the most prominent layman concerned in bringing Billy Sunday to New York, and also the following news from Isaac Ward, who handles Billy's work among factory men:

"The owner of a big factory drove up in his car near where I stood the other day, and I noticed a large dent in the door of his automobile. I asked him where he had had his collision. 'Collision?' he exclaimed, 'That's not a collision -- that's where my men have thrown stones at me.'

Well, we went into that factory and we stamped out every bit of labor agitation. Not only that, but we soon had no swearing in the place. We took no sides in labor disputes; we simply preached the gospel."

31 IX, 12, 14-15 (January, 1917).

32 IX, 33 (July, 1917).

33 IX, 28 (February, 1917).

The story need^{ed}/no comment, and received none.

Charles W. Wood, the Masses' drama critic, reviewed one of Sunday's New York performances sponsored by the metropolitan ministers under the title "Do Unitarians Stink? and Other Problems." Wood said that he had wanted to be fair to Sunday. Although he was fighting capital's battle against labor, still he must have a personal message. "I'll take it all back," he concluded. "Billy Sunday makes his appeal to the basest things in the nature of ~~of~~ man -- to fear, to cowardice, to ignorance, to superstition and to hate." As to the church, its sponsorship of the revivalist was "a confession of spiritual bankruptcy" which was adopted simply because it brought people in. "The preachers accept Billy because they think he is popular, while the people accept him because they think he is a preacher."³⁴ Whether bishops in convention or evangelists in a tent, the representatives of the church apparently served only business and had abandoned whatever spiritual message the church once had.

The only pretense the churches kept up, it seemed to the Masses, was that of brotherly humanitarianism disguising the hungry self-interest of its masters in pious and insubstantial reforms. As with politics, the editors tried to demonstrate that capitalism used the reformers or discarded them as they served to help or hinder the gains of the system. Established ideas of humanitarianism within the churches were the distinguishing marks of a faint-hearted liberalism. "The Liberal," wrote John Haynes Holmes, "seeks to save himself by culture, education, and development as an individual; and he seeks to save other people in the same way as individuals. Beyond this single individual and his need, he does

³⁴ IX, 30 (June, 1917).

not go."³⁵ Revolution demanded that more than individual aims be taken into account, so the Masses opposed traditional humanitarian and churchly attitudes toward liquor, the race question, charity and prisons, showing the falseness of the church when they could.

The Masses' consideration of prohibition was conditioned by the idea that a healthy proletariat would make a faster and better revolution and that business efficiency rather than religion was the root of the agitation. In December, 1914, after three Mountain States went dry, the magazine asked for a forum from its readers on the possibility of a Pure Liquor (or 5%) Act. Bill Haywood answered typically: "I am forninst [sic] the masses getting on the water wagon -- it is not a tenable place. Pure Liquor laws would not get the results you desire, any more than pure food laws have improved or purified living. Laws are made to break; profits will for a while determine the adulteration. Yours for industrial freedom."³⁶ Sardonicly accepting the churches' efforts for prohibition, another letter signed "J. S." said, "Let one of these great evils put forth all of its power to exterminate the other -- the Doctor of Divinity vs. the Demon Rum -- need we care which wins?"³⁷

At first, however, the magazine was tempted to join with the Methodists. Below the letters, John Barber sketched two drunks asleep at a table over the caption "Yours for the Revolution." This view of a reform which was the property of religion looked instrumentally sound because it

35 John Haynes Holmes, The Revolutionary Function of the Modern Church (New York, 1912), 34.

36 VI, 11 (January, 1915).

37 Ibid., 11.

seemed so clearly to help the revolution along in a scientific way. "Get busy, you middle class foes of booze!" wrote Kate Richards O'Eare. "We guarantee that if you can keep men sober, we will organize them for revolution."³⁸

The crusade for Pure Liquor petered out in indecision. "Our own attitude," said the editors cautiously, "is that of curious but impartial inquiry." Finally, by August, 1917, they had made up their minds to follow Haywood's advice, and printed a full-page advertisement to show that the entire campaign for prohibition was simply a diversion financed by the privileged interests to distract attention from the crusade for social justice. Reformers, as usual, were tools.

Humanitarianism as an answer to the problem of the Negro in the South seemed to the Masses to be completely idle. The editors inherited the fighting tradition of Garrison rather than the piety of insulated Northern brotherhood. They were sympathetic followers of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People which had been founded in 1910-11, and they subscribed to the immediate demands of the radicals led by W. E. B. DuBois rather than the moderate gradualism of Booker T. Washington. In 1914-15, there was a mass movement of Southern Negroes to Northern cities, a movement which increased greatly during the war. These were also important years in the great economic transition of the South to industrialism. It was this aspect of the racial question which most influenced the Masses.

The magazine claimed that "the worst offense of the Negro in the

38 VI, 21 (April, 1915).

South is not, as some have imagined, his color."³⁹ Rather, it seemed to the editors that it was the Negro's refusal to work in a factory. To counter demonstrations of white superiority directed toward cowing the Negro into obedience, the magazine recommended the use of armed power by the Negroes. To Christian Northerners they said: "They need not your pity. They need not your ethnological interest, your uplift endowments. They wait for their heroes"⁴⁰ As with the church's advice to the laboring man, the Masses condemned the concept of pacific brotherhood in race relations. At the same time, certain symbols were useful. Robert Minor made use of the appeal of Christian symbolism in a cover cartoon which caricatured the traditional Southerner against the background of two figures' crucified. "The Southern Gentleman Demonstrates His Superiority," read the caption.⁴¹ Direct action was the magazine's counter-advice to the Negro.

Stuart Davis drew a number of studies of Negroes in various situations, most of them unrelated to propaganda. Their hard realism, which the Masses offered as a substitute for the brotherly evangel, called forth a protest from Carlotta Russell Lowell to the effect that the magazine harmed and belittled the Negro. "Stuart Davis," wrote Eastman in response, "portrays the colored people he sees with exactly the same cruelty of truth with which he portrays the whites. He is so far removed from any motive in the matter but that of art, that he cannot understand such a

39 V, 20 (July, 1914).

40 IV, 6 (February, 1913).

41 VI, 1 (August, 1915).

protest"⁴² The editors, however, promised to be more careful in balancing art and propaganda, and over the next few months they printed a more direct attack on racial injustice. Mary White Ovington's dreadful true story of rape in Mississippi, "The White Brute,"⁴³ was an example, and an even more fearful account by an eye-witness of a lynching in Waco, Texas, "An American Holiday,"⁴⁴ was another.

One significant difference between the Masses and groups interested only in reforming evil through piety was in the magazine's straightforward and often ugly realism. In February, 1917, the magazine printed "Ebony" by George F. Whitsett:⁴⁵

I am an American Nigger
And a clean one.
My ancestors washed themselves
Every day in a clear river
And I worthy of them.
It is the pet horror of my life
To be thrown with the grimy whites,
To see their repulsive hands and nails and necks,
And to smell the odor of their perspiration.
I am a clean Nigger
And I pay for it.

With the lynching stories, such brutal frankness was directly opposed to pious hopes. The fundamental unity of injustice was illustrated by Helen Marot in January, 1917 when she applied the Waco incident to the labor struggle by claiming the same faces in the Texas mob as in Citizen's Alliances and the Law and Order Groups. Realism, with the Masses, led to

⁴² VI, 6 (May, 1915).

⁴³ VII, 17-18 (October-November, 1915). Miss Ovington was a founder of the N. A. A. C. P. See her autobiography, The Walls Came Tumbling Down (New York, 1947) in which "The White Brute" was reprinted.

⁴⁴ VIII, 12 (September, 1916).

⁴⁵ IX, 39 (February, 1917).

the active support of deeds rather than righteous hopes.

The organized private charities which sprang from the religious idea of stewardship were sporadically attacked. Kenneth Chamberlain drew a cartoon of a miserable woman and child in a poverty-stricken alley filled with charity workers whose investigation had reduced the fund donated for the woman to a mere \$2.37 which they duly presented to her.⁴⁶ Wilton Agnew Barrett submitted a long free-verse narrative of the visit of a church charitable committee to a poor washer-woman and her untended children. Effectively it ridiculed the convention that only self-help was fit for Americans and pricked the pious self-satisfaction of the church ladies.⁴⁷

The Masses found the guilty among the "Overlords of Charity," those who said with Mrs. John Glenn of the Russell Sage Foundation: "To demand of the state that it shall give relief to the widow and her children tends to lessen the family's sense of responsibility for its own."⁴⁸ Here, according to the magazine, was not only a defense of the official mock-piety of the upper classes, but a deliberate attempt to avoid further taxes. When a bill to take the care of widows and orphans out of private hands in New York was lobbied to death, the magazine traced the villainy to those with "Vested Rights in Charity," -- not the social workers, but the rich who supplied the money and salved their consciences.⁴⁹ The measure had been opposed as a step toward state socialism, but the

⁴⁶ IV, 8 (August, 1913).

⁴⁷ VIII, 21-2 (April, 1916).

⁴⁸ VI, 11 (April, 1915).

⁴⁹ VI, 11 (February, 1915).

Masses found the lobby motivated simply by economic self-protection masquerading in the cloak of religion, humanitarianism, and even patriotic duty -- to accept charity from the state was, it seemed, neither American nor virile, or so rich man Otto Barnard was quoted as saying.

As in the battles for labor and birth-control, the magazine was at its best when it could combine the direct support of the masses with an attack on capitalism, on the courts and other parts of "the system." On these familiar grounds, the church stood condemned beside other well known enemies. The winter of 1914 was a very bad one in New York. Thousands were out of work, homeless and destitute. The I. W. W., whose leaders had remained in the East after the Lawrence and Paterson strikes, attempted to organize the unemployed; and as a part of the job, they set about finding a way to get food and shelter. One idea that occurred to a young man named Frank Tanenbaum was to take the men to the churches. St. Mark's Socialist Fellowship fed and housed them for a night, but when they went to St. Alphonsius church, all of the men who entered were arrested. Tanenbaum was called into the church and then arrested and charged first with inciting to riot and later with unlawful assembly, a charge on which he could be convicted. For this crime, he was tried and given the maximum penalty of a \$500 fine and a year on Blackwell's Island.

The Masses responded immediately with a cartoon by Sloan of the steps of the church filled with men and police with drawn sticks under the indignant supervision of a fat priest. The caption was "Calling the Christian Bluff."⁵⁰ Eastman, in his accompanying article, said: "March 4th, 1914, is an important date in American history. On that date the

50 V, 12-13 (April, 1914).

Christian Church openly and arrogantly repudiated its professions of duty toward the poor -- the profession upon which it is founded, and without which it cannot continue to exist. It was an act of suicide."⁵¹ To make his point, he traced the case to show that Tanenbaum had no idea of challenging the church to a showdown, but simply brought the men to the church as a natural refuge for the poor. This was his crime, said the editor, to treat poor men as if they had rights. "Note this!" Eastman concluded, "it was in the effort to preserve the self-respect of the unemployed that Tannenbaum took them to the churches for food and shelter. And the churches -- failed."⁵²

In reporting the trial, Eastman wrote angrily: "What must outrage the moral sense of every man is that after acknowledging the high motive under which Tanenbaum had acted, confessing that there was no selfish purpose, no desire to injure anyone or gain anything for himself, that he was seeking 'only to better the condition of his fellow men,' Judge Wadhams inflicted upon that boy who had never been in a law court before, what is by the decent customs of the courts reserved for habitual criminals the extreme penalty of the law."⁵³ Again the whole system was fitted together, and the church joined the company of capital and the

51 Ibid., 10.

52 Ibid., 11. Frank Tanenbaum's name was also spelled "Tannenbaum" in the Masses.

53 V, 9 (May, 1914). Mary Heaton Vorse said in Footnote to Folly, 65, "It is important to remember that while the leadership belonged to the I. W. W., the rank and file was made up of neither class-conscious men nor bums, but of ordinary workers, largely skilled, out of a job." She knew. Her house was the headquarters for the struggle. It was by this experience, she said, that the unemployed could never again be a faceless, nameless crowd, that at last, she and her husband were no longer spectators as at Lawrence, but participants.

courts under indictment for the most brutal kind of injustice. When put to the test, humanitarianism was a hollow pretense.

Tanenbaum's speech to the court was reprinted. It rambled somewhat, but he made clear the point that he had not done as he did out of disrespect for the spirit of religion, although his meaning for religion was not that of the church. "Why," he said, "there is no more religious thing I have ever witnessed than that lot of homeless, half-fed, half-dressed, illy-clad men sitting over a long table enjoying a clean, warm meal, laughing and talking. That is the most religious thing I ever saw."⁵⁴ By comparison, he said, the priest would be the first to crucify Jesus again. Tanenbaum had not wanted a trial because he knew the outcome in advance; he knew that he had no chance, whatever his motives or the reality of economic justice. The capitalist court and church, he said, fully equipped with a capitalist jury on which no working-man ever sat, would have him guilty. Chamberlain summed up the whole case in a cartoon entitled "Contempt of Court," in which the young man faced the judge with the statement "You can arrest me but you can't arrest my contempt."⁵⁵

Tanenbaum went to prison and spent his year. When he got out, he contributed a series of articles on prison conditions to the Masses. The major thing he discovered was that the men were fully human even in prison. They had not lost their capacity to suffer for others. As Mabel Dodge recorded, Tanenbaum "wanted to stick to prisons, he said, wanted to learn more to improve himself, and then to give his life to changing the

⁵⁴ Ibid., 3

⁵⁵ Ibid., 7

conditions of prisons in America."⁵⁶ The Masses made the unusual gesture of paying him for his work so that he could attend Columbia University. The funds were supplied by friends, according to Mrs. Luhan.

Prison reform had religious sanction, but the church as an opponent was lost in recounting Tanenbaum's experiences. The reform of prisons was, according to Eastman, "the reform which is most interesting to a revolutionist."⁵⁷ The reason this reform stood apart from the class struggle was that "It can be in some measure accomplished without rectifying the distribution of wealth; and, rectifying the distribution of wealth will not accomplish it." The problem of what to do with the criminal remained in whatever social system existed. A riot at Sing Sing, said Eastman, was a good thing, because "without both pride and power from below, neither the system, nor the spirit of the system will ever be completely changed."⁵⁸ The Masses accepted a humanitarian reform, added a faith in the revolutionary spirit of even the "slum proletariat" to their dream of a new society, but at the same time refused to embrace the Utopian idea that a revolution would bring about the millenium in human character.

The interest in prison conditions and injustice and the rights of the criminal were not far removed from the Masses' positive idea of Jesus and his place in religion. In April, 1914, Sarah N. Cleghorn contributed the following stanzas as a part of a poem entitled "Comrade Jesus";⁵⁹

56 Luhan, Movers and Shakers, 116. Tanenbaum accomplished his purpose. His book, Osborne of Sing Sing (Chapel Hill, 1933), carried an introduction by the Hon. Franklin D. Roosevelt.

57 VI, 5 (June, 1915).

58 Ibid., 6.

59 V, 14 (April, 1914).

Thanks to Saint Matthew, who had been
 At mass-meetings in Palestine,
 We know whose side was spoken for
 When Comrade Jesus had the floor.

Where sore they toil and hard they lie,
 Among the great unwashed, dwell I
 The tramp, the convict, I am he;
 Cold-shoulder him, cold-shoulder me.

.

For law and order, it was plain,
 For Holy Church, he must be slain.
 The troops were there to awe the crowd,
 And violence was not allowed.

.

Ah, let no Local him refuse;
 Comrade Jesus hath paid his dues.
 Whatever other be debarred,
 Comrade Jesus hath his red card.

In the same issue, H. G. Alsberg, under the title "Was It Something Like This?" reported the last days of Jesus as they might have appeared in a modern version of the Roman newspapers. The expulsion of the money changers from the temple was reported as follows: "Jesus of Nazareth threatened to wreck the temple completely, the priests with death and the complete destruction of the building. His almost insane ravings were replete with vile vituperation of all those in authority and of the hard-working citizens of the empire, and exalted to the skies, as usual, the thriftless and improvident." Pontius Pilate was condemned for being dilatory and merciful, and the Jews were praised for their prompt action against the agitator.⁶⁰

This specific response to the Tanenbaum case, picturing Jesus as the leader of an army of the unemployed into Jerusalem, had been anticipated

⁶⁰ Ibid., 14. The poem was a mixture of Christian Socialism and "The Lower Depths," of hard irony with over-tender sentimentalism.

in the Christmas Number of 1913, an issue largely devoted to attacks on religion. Young's head of Jesus on the cover was part of a poster which read "He Stirreth up the People, Jesus Christ, The Workman of Nazareth, Will Speak at Brotherhood Hall, Subject, The Rights of Labor."⁶¹ Below the words "One of those damned agitators" Young wrote, "it is self-evident that had Jesus Christ, the great agitator of Palestine, been born in the last half of the nineteenth century, he would today be one of the many traveling speakers proclaiming the message of industrial democracy."⁶²

Eastman, son of two ministers, said that it was an uncertain problem whether or not Jesus was the exact equivalent of an agitator, but he did know that the man was poor, a well-doer, intelligent, exalted, a poet and comrade of the rejected. "Whether that Jesus of Nazareth," he wrote, "has had any real part in this institutionalized, aristocratic, sentimentally hypocritical hierarchy of the powers of conservatism that has arrogated to itself his sacred name -- this is no problem!"⁶³ Briefly scanning history from the time of Luther and the Peasant's War, he claimed that the churches always stood on the opposite side from their spiritual founder.

The Masses had little interest in spreading the truth of "The Higher Criticism." They had printed during 1913 a few satiric interpretations derived from the scientific knowledge of the Bible by Eugene Wood under the title of "The Masses' Bible Class." In racy, modern language, Wood told a number of stories, such as the first encounter of Moses with Jahweh, at the end of which Wood remarked typically: "All this may seem

61 V, 1 (December, 1913).

62 Ibid., 3.

63 Ibid., 5.

irreverent but it is the Biblical narrative that is irreverent when you take it as seriously as I do. It is the savage ideal of a deity that jars on the civilized mind and not its presentation in modern language."⁶⁴

Dismissing the active propaganda for scientific interpretation of the Bible, the Masses nonetheless followed at least a part of the discoveries of modern scholarship about the historical person, Jesus. When they approached the Gospels and the life of Jesus, they were working very closely with the ideas of Christian Socialism -- minus the church as an active ally or at least tool. "During the last days in Jerusalem," wrote Walter Rauschenbusch, "he was constantly walking into the lion's cage and brushing the sleeve of death. It was the fear of the people which protected him while he bearded the powers that be. His midnight arrest, his hasty trial, the anxious efforts to work on the feelings of the crowd against him, were all a tribute to his standing with the common people."⁶⁵ In summarizing Jesus' place in modern life, the theologian wrote: "But if we are forced to classify him either with the great theologians who elaborated the fine distinctions of scholasticism; or with the mighty popes and princes of the church who built up their power in his name; or with the men who are giving their heart and life to the propaganda of a new social system -- where should we place him?"⁶⁶

To this question, the Masses knew the answer, but this knowledge led it to reject the church completely. "We believe in Jesus," wrote Eastman in setting out the editorial policy of the magazine. "We believe

⁶⁴ V, 16 (October, 1913).

⁶⁵ Rauschenbusch, Christianity and the Social Crisis, 84

⁶⁶ Ibid., 92.

that he lived and died laboring and fighting, in a noble atmosphere of disreputability, for the welfare and liberty of man. To us his memory is the memory of a hero,"⁶⁷ The crime of the church was mostly that it had betrayed the hero, sold out to the ruling classes. Because of this view, the editors accepted gleefully the series of "Heavenly Dialogues" from C. E. S. Wood. "Whoever puts Jesus up there," wrote Eastman in defense of Wood, "dodges him down here -- that has been our experience. Look into your mind and find out whether it is Jesus of Nazareth that you want to defend against satire, or a certain paste-and-water conception of him which assuredly needs your defense."⁶⁸ Wood, although ostensibly putting Jesus "up there," certainly performed the task in terms of earthly ideas. A dialogue between God and Jesus as they walked the stars while Jesus tried to explain the problem of war babies was typical. It ended:⁶⁹

GOD: Then, what's the trouble?

JESUS: Why, can't you see, Father, that if the parents are not legally married the babies are illegitimate?

GOD: What's that?

JESUS: Not lawful.

GOD: My! My! How awful. Do they kill them? My Son, I cannot follow you.

JESUS: Well, Father, I'm puzzled myself, but the idea is this: the parents didn't have leave from the Church and the State to get these babies.

GOD: Well, I'll be -- -- No, of course, I couldn't be. Won't they let these babies grow up to be soldiers and laborers?

JESUS: O yes. But they'll be bastards. They'll be forever disgraced.

GOD: Who? The Church and the State?

JESUS: No, no, the babies -- the little War-Bastards.

GOD: My Son, all this makes me more tired even than these star stretches. Let's go home.

⁶⁷ VIII, 20 (December, 1915).

⁶⁸ Loc. cit.

⁶⁹ VI, 18 (September, 1915).

"To us," wrote Eastman, "a dialogue that ridicules, with exquisite art, this translated Christ and denatured gospel of a church that justifies exploitation and comforts with sanctimonious emotions those whose pockets profit by it -- such a dialogue expresses the very sharpness of our reverence for the memory of Jesus."⁷⁰

Although comparatively restrained, the response to the "Heavenly Dialogues" by Vida Scudder, socialist professor at Wellesley, was typical of many readers of the magazine who did not find Christianity at all unreconcilable with socialism. "I am not afraid of blasphemy," she wrote in a letter to the editor, "as I do not think the eternal verities are ever injured by it, and I like and approve sharp, clever attacks on all that is false and conventional in religion. But the smart and cheap vulgarity of that thing was too much for me. It is a pity."⁷¹ The Masses paid no attention to Miss Scudder and other critics; the editors continued to print Wood's satires to clearly differentiate their position from that of the Christian Socialists.

The Wood satires may have alienated some readers, but they did no great harm to the magazine. Much more damaging was the publication, in January, 1916, of a simple, short poem signed "Williams" and entitled "A Ballad." The second stanza ran:⁷²

Joe was as right as the compass,
Joe was as square as the square.
He knew men's ways with women,
An' Mary was passin' fair!
Passin' pretty an' helpless,
She that he loved th' most,
God knows what he told th' neighbors,
But he knew it warn't no Ghost.

70 VIII, 20 (December, 1915).

71 Ibid., 21.

72 VIII, 13 (January, 1916).

Between the fifth and sixth lines of the last stanza appeared a prose interpolation showing how Joseph and the child "'it it": "(Carn't yer see 'im standin' there in th' shop lookin' at th' brat like 'is eyes u'd eat 'im up an' sayin' to 'isself underneath 'is breath: 'Yer mine, God dam it, yer mine any 'ow! An' carn't yer 'ear th' brat lookin' up, an' sayin', 'Daddy'? Yes, 'im an' th' brat, they 'it it.)" The last three lines concluded:⁷³

An' after th' years had run,
Folks th't no more o' th' gossip,
But called 'im the Carpenter's Son.

Immediately, Ward and Gow, the newsdealers who held the franchise for the subway and elevated platforms in New York, refused to sell the Masses any longer. To Artemas Ward, who was no humorist, the magazine was blasphemous and unpatriotic, as subsequent events revealed.

The Masses responded slowly and without recognition of danger. Becker sketched a lady at a newsstand saying "Give me the MASSES." "Don't carry it any longer," replied the newsboy. "They blasphemed the boss of something."⁷⁴ The magazine noted the suppression, but only commented that sales on other stands had increased, showing "that there is a serious purpose in our 'blasphemies' and much point to our lack of 'patriotism.'"⁷⁵ It was March before the editors quite realized the consequences, in loss of sales, of their offense to the pious newsdealer. In a box labeled "Censored" they explained that they would lose three or four thousand readers unless subscriptions or sales from other stands made up the

73 Loc. cit.

74 VIII, 14 (February, 1916).

75 Loc. cit.

difference.⁷⁶

The editors chose to fight as well as they could, and they finally realized that the personal censorship of Ward was of great significance to American journalism. To get the case fully stated, they printed a full page of letters of reactions to the poem. Some letters raised moral questions, some literary questions, some recorded distinct pleasure at the straightforward interpretation of a coarse man like Joseph, and one even enclosed a copy, duly reprinted, of the English folk-carol "The Cherry Tree." To answer all of the letters at once, Max Eastman delivered "A Sermon on Reverence." He claimed that the cause for argument between the Masses and its readers had nothing to do with controversy over the Virgin Birth. The offended sensibilities were entirely within the readers. "The cause of that lies in your not revering nature," wrote the angry editor. "Only so can it outrage and violate your reverence to hear told in the language of plain people, in simplicity, and with excellent lyrical skill, nature's story of Jesus You are so morbidly out of love with the very core of human nature as it is forever, that even to hear it recited among sacred things rasps your souls."

Quoting a lawyer's opinion that they could not be banned for offending against taste or even the convictions of most Christians, Eastman pointed out to the writers of the condemnatory letters that most of them had objected vicariously, because someone else would be offended. Such people, he said, neither accepted the old truth nor had any real belief in the new. ". . . . the trouble with all you kind friends who preach to me," the editor concluded, "is that you have never heroically and affirmatively declared for truth. You are serious, but you are not serious

76 VIII, 13 (March, 1916).

enough. And you are gay, but you are not gay enough. The world will never get its rebirth from you."⁷⁷ The Masses believed that religion, like revolution, had to be filled with a zest for the realities of life, both social and individual.

The magazine refused to allow that the poem was chosen for any other reason than its truth and literary merit. Eastman, in his autobiography, linked the occasion with the general revolt of the editors against the genteel tradition of saying one thing in private life and another in public. "It would be hard to find a more real and recurrent life-problem, or a more simple and musical and genuinely idealistic treatment of it, than is contained in this ballad," wrote Eastman. "But because it published a point of view deemed suitable for private communication only, it became a kind of high crime on my part, and the main point of attack whenever anybody went forth against the Masses."⁷⁸ As a weapon against the magazine, the poem was freely used. In the May, 1916 issue, the Masses chronicled expulsion by the Columbia University Library, the Subway and Elevated Stands of New York, the Magazine Distributing Company in Boston, the United News Company of Philadelphia and the government of Canada. The reason given, notably in the case of Canada, was blasphemy. As the editors had from the beginning pointed out, the religious spirit was far from dead if, from their standpoint, channeled in the wrong direction.

Actually, the language of the poem, although rough and coarse, and typographically representing somewhat arbitrarily the accent of the

⁷⁷ VIII, 21 (March, 1916).

⁷⁸ Eastman, Enjoyment of Living, 476. The poem was reprinted in an appendix, 592-4.

common man, was tender and moving. The conception of Joseph, taken as a man, had a certain insight into the human predicament. The man came off well. But the prose interlude of the last stanza raised questions about mixed media, about form and content which could not best be defended by praising the general lyric tone. The verse was scarcely a literary masterpiece, despite its poetic feeling. The Masses made its big fight, and wisely too, on the grounds of religious rather than literary censorship.

The exclusion was followed by the hearings of the Thompson Legislative Committee which was investigating the Interborough Rapid Transit Company. On June 28th, Eastman got permission from State Senator George Thompson to question the witness of that day, August Belmont. With the editor was a distinguished group of liberals and radicals including Charles Scribner, John Dewey, Lincoln Steffens, Walter Lippmann, Herbert Croly, Franklin P. Adams, the Reverend Percy Stickney Grant, the Reverend Charles P. Fagnani and others. Belmont evaded most of the questions, but was finally induced to admit that he thought the newsstands fell under the classification of a public service. On the basis of this admission, the Masses lodged a complaint to force Ward and Gow to abandon their censorship.

Lincoln Steffens testified that he had been to see Ward, and the newsdealer had told him that he had excluded the magazine simply because it offended his religious sensibilities, and that the stands were his private property to be used as he saw fit. "I won't say it never will go back on the stand," Steffens quoted, "because if they become decent and produce a publication like the Atlantic, then I will let it back upon the stand."⁷⁹ It was like asking the conversion of Robert Ingersoll. The

⁷⁹ VIII, 21 (September, 1916).

testimony of a number of witnesses to the effect that the Masses was neither obscene nor blasphemous and that censorship by a private business man for whatever reason was extremely dangerous to American freedom, clearly focussed the issue of whether or not private conscience had a right to control public information.

Eastman pointed out in making his complaint that indecency and blasphemy were crimes to be held accountable in court. Not only would an illegal ban from distribution facilities destroy the editors' magazine as a private enterprise, but since they were idealists trying to give America the kind of magazine their consciences told them it needed, the ban even encroached directly upon the exercise of their religion. Speaking of the contributing editors, Eastman said: "The main purpose of their religion is not to make sure of the welfare of their own soul in the next world on Sundays, and then grab all the money they can off the counters of this world every other day in the week. The main purpose of their religion is to make humanity in this world more free and more happy."⁸⁰ Not only was the issue of a free press involved, but Eastman shifted the ground to show that free worship was also concerned, at least for artists and writers whose devotion was expressed through their work. The argument was neat and convincing, and although the religious emphasis might have failed to impress, there was little doubt that the Masses, given the money, could have won a long legal battle. The complaint to a legislative committee moved too slowly to be of practical help.

Artemas Ward remained firm. He was overwhelmed by a flood of letters from such distinguished people as Frank P. Walsh, Helen Keller,

80 Ibid., 5.

Charles Dana Gibson, Percy MacKaye, James Harvey Robinson, Walter Lippmann, Clarence Darrow, John Haynes Holmes, Ben B. Lindsay, Vida Scudder and Mitchell Kennerley. All of the letters stressed the point made by Lippmann: "It will be an evil day for this country when a group of business men who control an important means of distribution can exercise an irresponsible censorship because of religious or political prejudice."⁸¹

Such arguments and those who used them were dismissed as of no consequence by Ward in an article reprinted in the Masses from his monthly journal, "Fame." "These letters were sincere enough, no doubt," said Ward, "but so desperately biassed as to be quite unreasonable." He completely repudiated the idea that he had anything at all to do with public service, that his relationship to the public was any different from any other merchant. Hence, he said, the goods he chose to handle were his free choice. Apparently unaware of minority safeguards, he appealed to the Christian majority which would rule against the magazine as the court of democratic appeal. "Is it not absurd to accuse me of interfering with the liberty of the press because I personally decline to aid this sheet by selling it?" he wrote. "Do I muzzle the editor, stop the press or hold up the edition?"⁸²

The answer was, in effect, yes, depending on the degree of the monopoly of distribution, but Ward refused to consider the implications

81 VIII, 36 (October, 1916). Lippmann also commented on the nature of other magazines sold by Ward, and concluded: ". . . the company which suppressed THE MASSES has not suppressed these other papers and periodicals, that leads me to the conclusion that THE MASSES is not excluded for obscenity or lack of patriotism, but for its radicalism, its courage and its inconvenience." John Haynes Holmes put it somewhat more pungently: "I question the fitness of the purveyors of La Parisienne, etc., to determine for me what is immoral."

82 Ibid., 36.

of his decision. His reasons were clear: "Is it conceivable that a man who pays a rent of over half a million dollars should have his liberty limited in a way that would be intolerable to a newsdealer who pays a \$600 rental, or to an honest Catholic boy who has secured a free privilege through his alderman."⁸³ Privilege was the basis of the suppression, and a complete lack of responsibility to anyone except himself was the justification given by Ward. Religion came in a poor second as the Masses had constantly claimed. The magazine eventually made up the loss, but after a change to inferior paper and a smaller size and with the help of the issue of American participation in the war.

When the war in Europe began in 1914, the Masses responded with an ironic recognition of the relationship between religion and the nations at war. Becker sketched a benign and disinterested God relaxing in the clouds while uniformed figures representing all the warring nations raised their arms to him in prayer.⁸⁴ The same ambiguity was the subject of a "Heavenly Dialogue." But the editors, with other Americans, were not yet immediately embroiled in the war situation. "At this time many priests and parsons are doffing their solemn cloth in order to pull on the fighting uniforms of their country," wrote Eastman calmly. "And however one may judge the wisdom of the act, there falls away from them at least a sickening halo of pretence. They become in semblance what in reality they are, men of the twentieth century, motivated by the conditions and ideas of that century."⁸⁵ Hope was always present in honest

83 Ibid., 36.

84 VI, 24 (October, 1914).

85 VI, 14 (December, 1914).

truth, and perhaps the exploiting alliance of religion and capital would be recognized in this new frankness.

Although the Masses pointed out in brief notes throughout 1915, the irony of combining war and Christianity, the next powerful statements came in 1916. Boardman Robinson submitted a vicious cartoon entitled "The Deserter" which showed Jesus against a wall before a firing squad made up of soldiers of all nations. Above the wall soared the distinctive crosses and domes of the Christian religions of many sects.⁸⁶ In April, a C. E. S. Wood Satan told Jesus and God about his profitable munitions factories at Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, and in August, Saint Peter went to God about a lost soul -- one he couldn't find because it was too small. Reminded by Peter about the war on earth, God said:⁸⁷

GOD: O yes. I remember the War on the Earth. Fools killing Fools for their rulers.

PETER: Yes.

GOD: Why did he [the lost soul] manufacture munitions?

PETER: Because he was neutral. His country was neutral.

GOD: What's that?

PETER: They are willing to help both sides.

GOD: To kill each other?

PETER: Yes, sir. But in fact he only helped to kill Germans.

GOD: Why?

PETER: The Germans didn't need any help.

GOD: But why did this -- this soul manufacture munitions?

PETER: Why?

GOD: Yes, why? Did he love the Allies and hate the Germans?

PETER: No, he didn't care.

GOD: Then why make munitions to kill Germans?

PETER: Well -- er --

GOD: To make money?

PETER: I suppose so --

GOD: To give to your church?

PETER: Only a little of it.

.....

86 VIII, 18-19 (July, 1916). The American was an excellent caricature of Theodore Roosevelt.

87 VIII, 22 (August, 1916).

No organized church of major importance, with the possible exception of the Quakers, recognized this position.

As American participation came nearer, Becker contributed a more direct attack on religion in wartime. A soldier reinforced by a priest stood over a felled prisoner lying on the ground and said, "Now will you enlist?" "No!" said the victim, "It's against my God and my conscience." "To hell with your God and conscience," was the brutal response. "This is a war for civilization."⁸⁸ America's entrance into the war only sharpened the indictment of religion. Young contributed "Business and Spirituality," a sketch of two unctuous men in conversation! The Business Man: "Yes, indeed, Bishop, war will prove a great spiritual blessing to the nation." The Bishop: "And, on the whole, beneficial in its effect upon business, I have no doubt."⁸⁹ When the Reverend E. F. Weise was publically rebuked at a Methodist Church conference for saying that Christianity came before Americanism, Young sketched the conferring clergymen singing blessed are the warmakers with one forlorn gagged minister holding the score to blessed are the peacemakers. The caption read: "Singing the Wrong Tune."⁹⁰ In June, Boardman Robinson renewed the attack on Billy Sunday, showing the evangelist as a recruiting sergeant pulling a roped Jesus along the ground and saying: "I got him! He's plumb dippy over going to war!"⁹¹ From the cathedral to the tent, the church was in blatant alliance with militarism for the sake of profit as the Masses saw it.

88 IX, 9 (January, 1917).

89 IX, 9 (May, 1917).

90 IX, 9 (June, 1917)

91 Ibid., 13.

A long article on "The Religion of Patriotism" by Eastman analyzed the relationship of war to religion and attempted to show just how and why the Masses' editors stood apart from the new national religion which was rapidly coming into being as a result of the abdication of the church from spiritual concerns. Eastman accounted for the origin of any religion in devotion to an object or idea which satisfied a considerable number of instincts at once, such as fear, wonder, filial devotion and gregariousness. If these were combined, he wrote, and at the same time the God which symbolized them could seem real, the result was the fixation of religion. Socialism, for example, was just such a religion, complete with its gospel from Marx; but it failed to become universal within a society because it did not include the rich and powerful. Since intelligence and the search for truth were then free, it was better being without a God, said Eastman; but most men required a less rarefied loneliness and needed something to lean on. "And so our godless age has been characterized by a wistful hunger and search after religions," he wrote. "It is an age of 'isms.'"⁹²

Because the rich in the capitalist United States had to be taken into account by religion, there was the greatest danger in 1917 of the substitution for Christianity of a religion of patriotism. If this happened, both Jesus and democratic liberties, if they stood in the way, would go. God, said the editor, would be denounced from the very pulpits which were his last refuge. To show that this was indeed already come to pass, Eastman quoted from the pastor of Henry Ward Beecher's old church

92 IX, 8 (July, 1917). This cry of the twentieth century came remarkably early from the pen of Eastman.

in Brooklyn:⁹³

All God's teachings about forgiveness should be rescinded for Germany. I am willing to forgive the Germans for their atrocities just as soon as they are all shot. If you would give me happiness, just give me the sight of the Kaiser, von Hindenburg and von Tirpitz hanging by the rope. If we forgive Germany after the war, I shall think the whole universe has gone wrong.

The major instincts appealed to by the new religion were gregariousness (the herd instinct), hate long repressed by civilization (notably among the clergy), the full expression of egoism, of bragging, and the filial instinct expressed in the state. There were at least as many ties in patriotism as those which bound man to God. "In the very nature of the case," wrote Eastman, "if our theory of religion is true, there can be no two religions. If God will not fall in step with the United States army, God must go."⁹⁴

Among his acquaintances, said Eastman, the few who held out against the religion of patriotism seemed to fall into one of three classes: Platonic lovers of an idea, the temperamentally solitary, and rational theorists whose emotions were controlled by reason. The one common note among them was that all had given themselves to something other than nationalism. "Most of the people in our days of nervous modernity -- busy with labor, or busy with entertainment -- never heartily abandon themselves to anything," Eastman said. "Such people welcome the orgy of nation-worship merely as a chance to feel."⁹⁵ Patriotism was, said the editor, the

93 Ibid., 9.

94 Ibid., 10. This analysis applied to the later Fascism in Europe makes an interesting and significant parallel.

95 Ibid., 10.

easiest religion in the world. He did not believe it possible to argue with deeply rooted instincts. "But I do hope," he concluded, "that a fair proportion of the intelligent may be persuaded to resist the establishment, in their own minds or in American society, of patriotism as a religion an exposure of the extreme easiness of patriotic enthusiasm, its quality of general indulgence, might make them wish to bind themselves, if they must be bound, to some god that is more arduous and demanding of personal character."⁹⁶

The same high duty of man to man and of man to an indefinable absolute of truth which had marked the Puritans haunted the Masses group when the original sin of war troubled their prospective paradise. If they rejected Emerson's plain living as a goal for society, the editors never departed from high thinking. As they said again and again, they were dedicated to moral goals more firmly than their opponents. If faith remained chiefly an instrument for living and making a better life, as William James and John Dewey said, the editors of the Masses found faith good if it helped to meet the real demands of life.

The established churches were examined by the magazine and found wanting in every way; Jesus was as much the historical figure as the Deists of the eighteenth century had seen him, and as mutilated by organized religion. Yet withal, the Masses' spirit was deeply religious in its devotion to a morality and an ethic. If this seemed inadequate without some kind of theism, at least the editors could say with pride that they had built no new idols to be worshipped in the old way. Their devotion was to the welfare of the mass of mankind through the instrument

96 Ibid., 12.

of scientific truth -- not the metaphysical worship of the dogma of Marx or even the Marxian State. To traditionally religious men, their belief seemed blasphemous atheism. To the Masses, their opponents were childishly self-deluded. Both recognized the power of faith and of duty, of the abandonment of self for the higher goal of truth. The lonely eminence of men who had abandoned an anthropomorphic God proved vulnerable when it clashed with the united determination of conservative men, yet the socialization of religion was to prove its power and influence. Although bolder and freer, the Masses spoke for its time.

CHAPTER VI

ARTISTS IN REVOLT

On almost every subject with which the Masses dealt, the artists made an outstanding contribution -- so much so that the magazine was a successful and interesting picture-book even without the significance given to the pictures by the text. Since 1913, when Harper's Weekly began to reprint drawings from the Masses with appropriate acclaim, there has been no notable critical departure from respectful praise: "The Masses," wrote Frank Jewett Mather, "during its short life, was by far the ablest illustrated magazine in America."¹ This judgment, in much the same words, became the standard evaluation of art and social historians. The dynamic artistic and social vitality of the time was perfectly reflected in powerful and sensitive drawings which both held and transcended the immediate social issues with which the magazine was concerned.

It was the position of the Masses that the same "system" which repressed labor and women was repressive of art; as the institution of the church mutilated religion, so the institutions of publishing distorted the work of the artist. From the beginning, the magazine was in deliberate revolt against the almost universal editorial control of the artist in the interest of profit. "The fact that nobody is trying to make dividends out of The Masses," wrote Max Eastman, "has given it a unique character, has given it the freedom for a perfectly wilful play of the creative faculties, such as would inevitably produce unique

1 Frank J. Mather, The American Spirit in Art (New Haven, 1927), 317.

works of art."² This freedom was to be contrasted with the popular mass-production of shoddy clichés in other magazines. The most obvious demonstration of the low state of magazine art against which the Masses fought could be seen by glancing at the magazine covers displayed on any newsstand. By 1900, "the chorus-isation of the cheap magazine was complete, and the day of the artist model had dawned."³ The pink and white feminine simper was the apparent norm for magazine illustration.

You smeared and smirking little bag,
 You plump, appealing little brute, you,
 Displayed to please when senses flag,
 You little paper prostitute, you.

So seymour Barnard addressed the false and unhealthy apparition of American art,⁴ whose duty seemed to be to lure the jaded reader into buying a mass of advertisements whose attractions were displayed with the help of other suggestive and unreal females.

The Masses' blow for the freedom of artistic integrity was dramatically illustrated in the reproduction of a cover made from an excellent flat design by Stuart Davis, which showed two mercilessly true heads of real girls printed in strikingly effective greens and blacks. The editors reinforced the challenging realism and artistic honesty with a caption to help make the point: "Gee, Mag, Think of Us Bein' on a Magazine Cover!"⁵ Beside the pink and white on the newsstands, the greens were poisonous;

2 Eastman, Journalism versus Art (New York, 1916), 10.

3 Tassin, The Magazine in America, 366.

4 IX, 3 (January, 1917).

5 IV, 1 (June, 1913). This was one of the drawings reproduced by Harper's Weekly.

beside the artificial stereotypes, actuality and the shaping vision of the artist's eye made the cover vibrantly alive.

After the magazine had continued its startling and dramatic honesty both on the cover and within the body of the Masses for two years, Eastman phrased the lessons he had learned from the artists about the contrast between prostituted art and the real thing. "We shall find," he wrote of the illustrations in the popular magazines, "that they each arise out of the desire to please everybody a little and displease none."⁶ Art, as with other manifestations of life in a capitalist-controlled society, seemingly was ruled by the economic necessities of the profit motive rather than by truth.

The standardized product which resulted from pleasing everybody was analyzed by Eastman as it appeared in different forms. Photographic "realism" pleased because everyone enjoyed easy recognition; a less realistic design soothed the eye if it was quiet and repeated enough to become familiar; the romantic feelings stimulated by formulaary love and pathetic children pleased because they were universal cliches; and any idea which was not inherently displeasing gave a little pleasure to everyone. The only variety possible in the magazines, if no one was to be alienated from buying, was in size, shape and position of the pictures on the page -- a variety which further reduced artistic possibilities by squeezing and crowding the pictures with text and distorting them by weird extraneous margins. "A magazine which is 'chuck full of pictures and stuff' seems to be a fat bargain," Eastman explained the justification for pictures. "No matter whether the pictures really exist or not -- they look

6 What is the Matter with Magazine Art?" VI, 15 (January, 1915).

as though they did, and the number is large, and it takes a long time to crowd one's way through the magazine, and one feels as though he were getting his money's worth."⁷

Magazine illustration was a product of almost complete indifference to the values either of reality or of art. "All the reader cares about is that the magazine should not look dull when he approaches it; all the editor cares about is that the reader should be led to approach it; all the author cares about is that he should have a popular artist's name attached to his story; and all the artist cares about is that he should sufficiently conform to the business standard of art so that the editor will give him a full, or at least a half-page, and pay him a full or at least a half-price."⁸ The result was the paper prostitute and the death of artistic values. As E. Sheppard Brown put it in a cartoon of a capitalist with an arm around a tattered girl: Rich Patron-of-the-Arts to the Arts: "Come on now, kid. Don't take it so hard. You know I can't marry you. But see what I will give you, all this money."⁹

The Masses could not solve the economic problem for its artists because it had no money, but the magazine could provide an opportunity for the artist to show what the art of a reconstituted society would be like. If the artists could manage to exist by part-time prostitution to other magazines and newspapers, the Masses could give them a chance to print their honest work so that they would not completely die or sell the whole of their souls. The magazine could provide a make-up in which the

7 Loc. cit.

8 Loc. cit.

9 IX, 42 (July, 1917).

picture would be reproduced as large as possible in a space which was devoted solely to the needs of the picture rather than the surrounding text. The magazine could give freedom, freedom to state the truth and make enemies as well as friends. This was the primary reason why the Masses wished "to conciliate nobody, not even its readers." The center of art was to be the artist's vision of life, life filled with the gusto of the age of Elizabeth to which would be added the "ideals and achievements of science and democracy."

Taking their usual anti-dogmatic position, the Masses' editors did not propose any one kind of art for the future. When commercialism disappeared, they did not wish to replace it with a careless freedom from technical excellence, a slavish imitation of foreign sources, or any particularized realism of subject matter. Art was especially not to be judged in terms of a conventional and false morality which insisted on evading life by looking at pretty clouds.¹⁰ But there was one important caution. As Eastman stated it: ". . . if intelligence is renounced for temperament, if Art and not Life becomes the center of interest, if men prove too little for the adventure -- then debauchment and dementia praecox are the harvest, and the hope is postponed."¹¹ The socialist ideal was the fully developed artist, but the artist within society as during the Renaissance, not "freakishly sequestered as in the late nineteenth century.

10 The realistic demand for the admission of all kinds of subject-matter exactly paralleled Henry James' argument in his famous essay on "The Art of Fiction."

11 VI, 16 (January, 1915). The rejection of art for art's sake was specific and probably directed in part at the influence of cubism and post-impressionism. See page 223.

Within the world of the Masses and its meetings, a world which was crossed by all the exciting currents of the time, which reached out to an approximate average of fifteen-thousand subscribers every month, there was at last a place for the lonely American artist among his fellows. To be sure, there had been the Player's Club and Salmagundi Club, but these were for the successful money-makers. There were the Brevoort, Mouquin's on Sixth Avenue and Pettipas' on Twenty-ninth Street; but these restaurants were scattered and served chiefly for occasional and casual encounters with other artists. Dell wrote of the early Greenwich Village: ". . . . artists and writers had always lived here -- but in tiny groups and cliques, mutually indifferent, or secretly suspicious of each other."¹² The Liberal Club became the social center, and the Masses became the intellectual and artistic center which gathered these diffuse and struggling groups together.

The meetings provided the continuous stimulus toward professional accomplishment produced by the judgment and criticism of each other's work. To add to the purely professional concern with techniques and medium, there was a continuous social and artistic pressure from intelligent and vociferous outsiders ranging from literary editors to labor leaders. If the real economic status of the Florentine workshop of Leonardo was missing, as was the real governmental paternalism of the French salons,

12 Dell, Love in Greenwich Village, 19. Alfred Kreyenborg in Troubadour, 207, expressed a common romantic idea of the artist which seems typical of the American idea of art. "The failures of group efforts simply demonstrated that the average artist is an anti-social person, and when he turns sociable it is usually at the expense of some compromise with his inner being. He was therefore better off in isolated places like Spoon River and Winesburg than he might be in the midst of his kin, where too much love or too much envy tended to soften or harden the integrity of his ego." No amount of meeting seemed to affect the egos of the Masses' artists.

the illusion of status, of a right to revolt, filled the artists and for a time led them toward a significant power and skill. Susan Glaspell said that simplicity of living was the primary gift of the Village to the artists. "Each could be himself," she wrote, "that was perhaps the real thing we did for one another."¹³ When the artist could be himself, it was obvious that he created art. The Masses was a demonstration.

The multiplicity of interests which characterized the Masses' editors had a great influence on the artists' work, directing it away from the purely artistic revolt which marked many French painters of the time.¹⁴ Because the American artists paid attention to concerns other than professional, the plastic and aesthetic problem often gave way to the social. The recognition of this artistic dualism shaped the standards of choice for pictures in the Masses. The editors fully realized that individual and social development were not the same thing, but they believed that the two were so inter-related that either kind of development would reinforce the other. If the creator were a genuine artist, there seemed no need to limit him to a pattern of aesthetic rebellion -- even if artistic standards were fundamental. Their first question of any picture concerned its honesty and excellence as a work of art, and often enough, a drawing was selected simply because it was a good drawing. Perhaps the best

13 Susan Glaspell, The Road to the Temple (New York, 1941), 236.

14 Marechal Landgren pointed out that the governmental status of the rebel in France allowed for regular channels of purely artistic rebellion led by the enfant terrible, but that in America, the same rebel was forced to become a social and political revolutionary. Landgren's book was still in manuscript at the time of this writing (1950). His major point about the realistic tradition represented by the "Eight" is that they rebelled against a narrow individual and economic patronage of art in the United States rather than against artistic repression -- a distortion from which their work suffered.

example of this kind of selection was the series of semi-abstract drawings of Negroes by Stuart Davis. Carefully planned and executed, they also abstracted the significant reality of the subject matter. There was no obvious relationship to the "policy" of the magazine, and the editors felt no need for justification other than by the honesty and competence of the artist, although they were made aware of the possibility of prejudices being read into the drawings.

The line between honest excellence and an exploitation of individual skill was difficult to draw. Some of the pictures the editors selected for their artistic merits were not especially good; but generally, the level was extraordinarily high, as might be expected as a result of the powerful give and take of expert and free group judgment. Since the pictures were all representational, there was an undoubted influence on the editors' vote from a series of ideas such as socialism, labor organization, feminism, religion and war. If a piece of work was adjudged excellent and fitted into these ideas, it was printed; however, a general desire for the joy and beauty of life made a wide frame of reference into which diverse subjects could be placed.

There were, of course, drawings accepted which had little but timeliness to recommend them. Naturally enough, the battles which the magazine was fighting had an influence on the work done by the artists and on the selection. Sloan's violent covers at the time of the Ludlow massacre, Becker's telling caricature of Wilson kicked by the mine owners and Chamberlain's attacks on the Rockefellers were in a sense commissioned work. They reflected the immediate interests of the magazine, and whether they were produced at the urging of one of the editors, out of the mass feeling of a monthly meeting or from the artist's own perception of injustice was irrelevant. The editorial standard remained one of excellence.

and when Minor drew his powerful, lunging soldier with bayonet buried in the body of a striker and labeled it "Pittsburg," the stimulus of an actual strike, the reports in the papers and at the meetings, and years of thought and feeling about violence against labor combined with technical excellence to produce a fine cartoon which made its point. This combination was the ideal, although in many instances it was not attained.

Chamberlain, who did many excellent things for the magazine, sketched Tanenbaum's trial over the caption "Contempt of Court," and failed with the drawing as a whole despite the effectiveness of the central figure which made the immediate point. The criticism was directed at the work of George Bellows that he sacrificed artistic values, especially in his backgrounds, for the dramatic action and movement of his central idea. Not all of the Masses' drawings so effectively discarded technical values.

Another important factor in the selection of pictures was humor. "I have observed it as a frequent phenomenon," wrote Upton Sinclair, that an advocate of new ideas is not permitted to have a sense of humor; that is, apparently, reserved for persons who have no ideas at all."¹⁵ The Masses' editors, deeply grounded in the traditions of American humor, refused to concede the weapon of laughter. They gloried in the ludicrous, the ironic, the wryly exaggerated reality which had marked the work of such literary figures as Mark Twain. Mather said that Art Young was easily America's greatest caricaturist. "What made his art great is its concentration both as thinking and as execution," he wrote. "He is at once very serious and irresistibly droll, having that most precious gift of the illustrator, a spontaneous sense for a situation."¹⁶ The praise,

¹⁵ Sinclair, American Outpost, 229.

¹⁶ Mather, American Spirit, 317.

as a tribute both to Young and his fellow-editors, might well be applied generally to the magazine. The editors could not conceive of a true artist or a real man who was incapable of amusement or of projecting his humor, whether light or grim, to the fullest into every aspect of life. As Eastman said, they would give anything for a laugh except their principles.

"Mostly the picture has a humorous quality," wrote Edmond McKenna of the Masses' artists' work, "for humor knows and humor is an analyst and not a funny man."¹⁷ No aspect of the Masses has been so frequently misunderstood. "The struggle between comic playboyism and serious reportage went on in the pages of these two magazines [the Masses and its successor The Liberator] almost from the beginning," wrote the authors of The Little Magazine.¹⁸ Actually, the editors despised "playboyism," but for them there was no conflict between laughter and seriousness, nor could there be. Their humor ranged from the silvery laughter of the Comic Spirit giving true proportion to false and inflated sentiment to a sardonic and bitter rage which turned high comedy into grim satire. Always, however, the laughter was robust and revealing -- a prime weapon against powerful antagonists. Whatever may be characteristic of others, humor has always been a prized instrument of American society, nowhere more

17 VI, 12 (June, 1915).

18 Hoffman, Allen and Ulrich, The Little Magazine, 152. Whether humor has a place in revolution remains a moot point. The United States was nowhere near an actual revolt at this time or at any time since. Fancism has a large part to play in the time of real violence, and probably in the preparation. But when the fanatic so badly estimates the realities as to be ineffective, humor is a much needed corrective. It was possible to laugh with the Masses or to be angered by it, but it was very difficult to laugh at it. Here was a lesson later American radicals might well have learned.

apparent than in the face of the most serious realities.

Neither breadth of principal, excellence of result or sense of humor kept the Masses from a major conflict over artistic matters. In March of 1916, a revolt against the editor took place among the contributing editors. According to Robert Carlton Brown, the only rebel among the literary editors, the root of the difficulty was the salary paid to Eastman and Dell for editorial work, while the contributors went unpaid. The younger artists, who lacked the established markets of some of the older men, were especially resentful, according to Brown.¹⁹ Two other issues, however, dominated the actual quarrel in open meeting: whether there was an editorial art which should limit or expand through captions the work of the contributing art editors; and whether or not the magazine should commit itself to any kind of "policy" which would influence the selection of drawings for publication. The rebels included Stuart Davis, Glenn O. Coleman, Maurice Becker, Henry Glintenkamp and Robert Brown, but took an even more serious importance when Art Editor John Sloan, despite his own political and social beliefs, became the spokesman for the younger artists.

The question of editorial control was, perhaps, impossible of decision. Not only was there the hard fact that the magazine lived on Eastman's ability to raise funds, but there was the equally stubborn reality of the exigencies of make-up. To these facts the artists opposed a plan something like the MacDowell Club exhibitions which had been sponsored by Robert Henri, George Bellows and others in 1910. They wished their portion of the magazine to be a kind of art gallery "in which each artist is given an opportunity, subject only to the tolerance of his fellows, to

¹⁹ Brown, "Them Asses," 410.

exhibit at any given time anything that he chooses."²⁰ Eastman saw in such a plan the sacrifice of "symmetry, completeness, order, timeliness, unity in variety, and so forth " to an ideal of complete individual freedom. Although desirable in the abstract, this seemed to the editor and others pragmatically impossible and an inhibition on their efforts to produce a society in which such an ideal was feasible. This aspect of the quarrel was an obvious statement of the problem of the individual versus the collective good with the question of dictatorship already a part of the difficulty.

The opposition of "policy" to art for art's sake was stated most effectively by Young, who departed from his usual personal mildness to move the expulsion of the rebellious artists. Those who painted "ash cans and girls, hitching up their skirts in Horatio Street" belonged exclusively in art magazines, he said, if they denied any further significance to their work than the skillful representation of ugliness.²¹ Young and the literary editors insisted upon supplying, if necessary, a moral, ethical or political point to give real social meaning to the artist's work. There was no suggestion that there might not be a place for another kind of drawing than realistic within the magazine, but any insistence upon completely artistic objectivity among realists and satirists of the social

20 Eastman, Journalism versus Art, 11-12. The plan was tried in a short-lived magazine called Spawn published by the rebels for two issues. It was advertised in the Masses: "No editor! A group of artists, each of whom pays for his own page, and puts what he wants to on it. . . ."

21 According to Sloan, this was the origin of the label applied retrospectively to the famous "Eight." Young was suggesting that the "Eight" and their followers were not true social realists, much less revolutionists, substituting false and arbitrary symbols such as ash cans for the revolution which the label came later to imply. The label, of course, applied more strictly to an aesthetic revolution, but was supplied much later than 1908.

scene seemed to Young completely false and a violation of the natural social function of the individual artist. Sloan, Davis, Glackens, Glintenkamp and most notably Coleman contributed many drawings which were simply observations of reality. The selection of the drawing had to be made in terms of artistic merit, but a further editorial function was, without touching the work of art, to give it relevance by caption or placement. Such was the insistence of Young, Chamberlain and all but one of the literary editors.

The rebellion was unsuccessful. Eastman offered to resign, but the vote was a tie at the first meeting. By the next month, the vote was 11 to 6 to refuse the resignation, the majority including four proxies voted by Dell and Young.²² It was at this point that Young moved to expel the rebels. A sobered staff rejected the motion and elected the rebels to office instead, but the next day Sloan, Davis, Becker and Brown resigned, although Becker returned to the staff in 1917. Robert Minor, Boardman Robinson, G. S. Sparks and John Barber replaced the departed artists. Glintenkamp, Bellows and others who had sympathized with the rebels remained with the magazine.

There were artistic cross-currents involved in the Masses quarrel beyond the particular problems of the magazine. American realism had major expression and influence in the exhibition of the "Eight" in 1908. Four of the eight had been newspaper illustrators before the day of the photographic supplement. Their work as graphic reporters developed a

22 Another element in the revolt was the question of Eastman's "arrogant dictatorship." This aspect was emphasized by later Marxist critics. See Hicks, John Reed, 214, or Hicks, The Great Tradition (New York, 1935), 296. Like Brown's financial emphasis, this seems to be a distortion of what actually happened, although it may well have been an underlying motive on the part of the rebels.

"realism that did not choose the picturesque or pathetic or charming aspects of American life for the sake of any of these qualities," as Suzanne LaFollette wrote. "Rather these men took life as it was -- the squalor of the overcrowded city slums, the merriment of children at play, the bustle and confusion of crowds -- and sought to impart the significance they found in it."²³ As literary realism had moved from the careful selection of Howells to the broader, yet more "slanted" naturalism of Crane, Dreiser, Sinclair and London, so the artists developed from the work of Homer, Eakins and the "Eight" into the graphic realism of the Masses group. American graphic art looked hard at the American city and found in it the same mixtures of good and evil, of beauty and ugliness which the writers discovered -- and with the same emphasis on evil and ugliness. Such "realism of the streets" had obvious artistic limitations, but was nonetheless in honest and deadly opposition to the academic prettiness which marked both artistic and popular standards of criticism.

The significant artistic event of 1913 was the International Exhibition of Modern Art, the "Armory Show," which introduced to America and its artists the work of the Post-impressionists and the "Fauves." The winds of doctrine immediately began to blow, and the attention of the painters came slowly to be focussed on Paris as it had been split between Paris and Dusseldorf at an earlier time. The influence of the American realists was submerged until the furor over "regionalism" in the nineteen-thirties. Whether the cubist and non-representational influence was unhealthy or not, whether social realism was in opposition to the painterly, as the Masses' rebels suggested, both influences

23 Suzanne LaFollette, The Artist in America (New York, 1929), 304-5. ✓

opposed the same enemy. "It would seem that the fundamental conflict was between the dead and the alive. Both the influences of the 'Revolutionary Gang' and the repercussions of the Armory show made a united attack upon that dreadful hoax to which the American public had given its unthinking allegiance for such a long time that it had actually come to believe that academic, pastiche ornament was the 'beauty of art,'" wrote Albert Christ-Janer. "The attack of the alive in art was successful; it achieved a victory all around."²⁴

The Masses generally stood on the side of realism because of the editors' concern with social truth and their devotion to the proletarian and his interests. They tried at the same time to give some representation to purely artistic development because their goal was liberty for all, and they saw no reasonableness in banning their goal in order to reach it. When the conflict between social purpose and art for its own sake came into the open, a majority of the editors were forced to take a stand which they did not like. It was obvious that the work of Stuart Davis, for example, was not "playboy," but the production, consistent and expert, of a serious artist. But the heat of the conflict forced lines to be drawn which were apparent rather than real. Ironically enough, much more space was given after the quarrel to such men as Hugo Gellert, Frank Walts and Arthur B. Davies, who were completely independent of the social theme of the Masses as Sloan and the rebels had never been.²⁵

24 Albert Christ-Janer, Boardman Robinson (Chicago, 1946), 25-6. ✓

25 The seceders won another victory when in 1917 the issues from April to June were edited pictorially by the artists. All of the rebels were represented by sketches, unfortunately not typical of the best work of any of them. So no point was proved.

The Masses' readers were also concerned with the artistic problem, but usually without much perception of the nature of the struggle between artistic and social integrity. "The kind of illustrations used in THE MASSES are, to me, absolutely meaningless," wrote H. N. Bartlett of Wilkinsburg, Pennsylvania, "and I believe I am just as much in earnest in having society revolutionized as you" ²⁶ This correspondent wanted information on economic matters, and any departure from obvious propaganda displeased or bothered him. The pressure for dogmatic adherence to unmistakable party propaganda was, in art as in other questions, continuous. "The artist," Dell wrote in explanation, "is one who has the power to show the rest of us what his world is like To see the world as the artist sees it is the privilege of all of us. But we must either want to see the world his way, or we must go about our business and let him alone." ²⁷ This answer was incomplete for advocates of revolution. The artist's individual vision was at best not the entire answer. "Sometimes the world of the artist is suffused, colored, lighted up, by some strong social emotion such as mirth or anger, which he desires intensely to share," Dell continued. "Then he goes out of his way to make us share it, putting his work in A.B.C. so that he who runs may read, and laugh or be angry along with him. That is the cartoon." As Dell said, nobody had to ask that Art Young meant. Clearly though, the social was only a part of the artist's concern and rested upon his individual artistic vision. Disregarding all pressures, the magazine continued to distinguish itself by its inclusion of both the individual and the social, demonstrating as

²⁶ IX, 37 (December, 1916).

²⁷ "What Does It Mean?" VIII, 23 (April, 1916).

well as advocating the goal of liberty.

Such an undogmatic position resulted much as did the Masses' advocacy of feminism and other issues not immediately within the socialist doctrine. Their art was attacked as being non-revolutionary. "THE MASSES seems to me to have a predilection for long hair and a flowing red tie -- a predilection that is picturesque, and an amiable weakness, at worst, in a mere Bohemian; but it is distinctly reprehensible in a revolutionist," wrote Ralph Cheney from the University of Pennsylvania.²⁸ Another epithet which threatened to pigeon-hole the magazine began to plague the editors.

Greenwich Village later became a glamorous name for the Sunday supplements to conjure with, but when many of the Masses' editors first arrived in the Village, it was perhaps more, as Arthur Bullard suggested, an ethical rather than an aesthetic Bohemia. Although there were and had been artists and writers in the area for many years, they lived in comparative isolation, quietly pursuing their work. Greenwich House and the settlement house movement were more important than art. As the Village became more obviously an island in the spread of the city, cut off by its narrow, winding streets and the barrier of Greenwich Avenue, as the

28 VIII, 22 (May, 1916). The term "Bohemian" is difficult to define in a useful sense, especially since it has been used so often as an epithet to dismiss something disliked or feared or both. The Masses has been so characterized both by conservatives and later Communists. If the word is used in a Murgerian sense to describe artists and writers whose lives are free as compared to the clock-circumscribed days of most men and women, then many of the Masses' editors and contributors were obviously Bohemians. See Arthur Moss and Evalyn Marvel, The Legend of the Latin Quarter (New York, 1946) and Albert Parry, Garrets and Pretenders (New York, 1933). If, however, the term is meant to imply purely individual revolt against the conventional morality of a bourgeois society, a revolt which poses as social revolution without any real understanding or serious revolutionary intention, then the Masses' editors seem not to fit the definition. Any use of the word applied to the group during the years of the Masses needs careful qualification.

rents lowered with the abandonment of the Washington Square district by the older families, the artists moved in, lured by studio possibilities and low rents, as well as by the comparative quiet and peace. The Village was a neighborhood, close to the teeming East Side, filled with laboring men and women, social workers and creative artists.

The Masses joined the ethical with the artistic in the name of social revolution, and at the same time kept the artists in touch with each other and the larger world around them. Within its pages there was space for individual rebellion if it took vital artistic form, or if it could be fitted into a pattern of social revolution.²⁹ With revolt for its own sake or intellectual anarchism, the magazine had little to do. Sloan, in a drawing entitled "The Extreme Left," sketched two typical rebellious triflers, a beefy but "artistic" girl spread out on a sofa under a Japanese print, and a cocky little man with flowing tie and cigarette at an angle sprawled in a straight chair. The lolling girl said: "Why don't those strikers do something -- let a few of them get shot, and it'll look as if they meant business."³⁰ For such temperamental

29 The publishing of nude drawings, for example, was attacked at the time as both immoral and unrevolutionary. Eastman answered the moral question in "Naked yet Unashamed," IV, 5 (March, 1913), pointing out that to the Masses, such questions were the product of distorted minds. "In so far as an artist should appeal to and play upon this unworthiness of the civilized mind," he wrote, "you might justly condemn his pictures, and perhaps call them coarse. But in so far as he naturally ignored it, those who were unable to appreciate, would do well to envy his superior equilibrium." If the editors found the sketches good by professional standards, they were printed. The "smartness" of the editor's answer often seemed simply to challenge the bourgeois reader, but it was usually supported by analysis and thought. Sometimes, the Masses simply snapped at its critics. As a phase of the revolt against "bourgeois morality," the magazine was just clever, but the wit usually took on revolutionary meaning within the context of the magazine for anyone but the casual page-turner.

30 Glaspell, The Road to the Temple, 247.

revolutionaries, the Masses had little sympathy, although a good offering from any source might be printed if the editors approved the work.

For the curious thrill-seeker from outside as well as the "artistic" poseur, the editors had only hostility and distaste.³¹ That artists were poor and had to make their own pleasures rather than buy them led John Sloan to climb to the top of the arch in Washington Square with a student, "Woe" of Texas, Marcel Duchamp and others to proclaim the republic of Greenwich Village, but the adventure did not distract either from Sloan's work or his devotion to socialism. That Dell and Eastman helped with the amateur theatricals at the Liberal Club and later at the stable on MacDougall Street which sponsored the early plays of Eugene O'Neill did not detract from their serious work. Even the money-making Masses' Balls at Webster Hall were designed as simple recreation where artists and writers were supposed to have fun and use their imaginations on costumes rather than as showplaces for the id. Susan Glaspell put it very simply. "Through the years I knew it," she wrote, "it [Greenwich Village] was a neighborhood where people were working, where you knew just what street to take for good talk when you wanted it, or could bolt your door all day long I never knew simpler, kinder, more real people than

31 The popular stereotype of Greenwich Village of the nineteen-twenties has often been applied retrospectively to the earlier time. Albert Parry, the historian of American Bohemia, characterized the tone of the later Village: "It was a mood of arty indolence, of declassed nihilism, of preoccupation with sex and soul, of revolting for the sake of revolt, of crazy escapades under the motto: it's good to be alive, but let's pretend we are unhappy, bored and tragic!" See Garrets and Pretenders, 199. Such a mood was patently not that of the Masses. Parry's book treated the magazine extensively, but remained somewhat uncertain as to exactly how to place it in relation to Bohemia. The general conclusion seemed to be that the Masses was not Bohemian, yet a manifestation of that Bohemian site, Greenwich Village, which was somehow different for a time. For a poetic and sentimental Village history which also emphasized the difference between the earlier and later Greenwich Village, see Floyd Dell, Love in Greenwich Village (New York, 1926).

I have known in Greenwich Village."³²

A letter from Irwin Granich, who later as Michael Gold edited The New Masses, saluted the Masses' achievement "with its beautiful, far-reaching drawings, its stirring stories, its happy, profound burlesque, and its grave, golden flashes of wisdom." The reason Granich gave for such praise of the magazine was that it "was complete as a man or magazine ought to be, instead of stodgy and slow-footed and consciously 'intellectual,' as academics everywhere."³³ This, it seems, was the editors' goal. Although never Bohemian in the frothy, glittering sense of the word, the magazine was strong because in it there were men, not just theories. As these men held up the mirror to their time and country, so did the magazine. The Masses fed on disagreement among individuals, yet it maintained a continuous social aim.

The drawings in the Masses could be classified on a scale from "pure" art to the propaganda cartoon. Obviously the professional concerns of the artist could not be eliminated from a consideration of any of the

32 Glaspell, The Road to the Temple, 247.

33 VIII, 41 (September, 1916). The later evaluation of the Masses by the Communists, who were both proud of the brilliance of the magazine and hostile to its inclusiveness and failure to understand the need for the discipline of dogma, was typified by an appreciation of Michael Gold: "That he remained steadfast in an era of apostacy and that he triumphed over the emotional, anarchic Bohemianism of the Masses group can be attributed to the depth of his roots in the working class." See Granville Hicks, The Great Tradition (New York, 1935), 297. Since the Masses' editors refused to follow the party-line, they had to be explained as "petty-bourgeois" rebels, as emotional "Bohemians." Such a description seems relevant only within the strict and peculiar logical framework of the Communist Party. The New Masses, for all its title, was not a direct continuation of the older magazine. The Masses was followed by The Liberator, owned by Eastman and his sister, Crystal. When it petered out in 1924, the magazine was given to the Communist Party and united with the Labor Herald and Soviet Russia Pictorial to form the Worker's Monthly.

drawings, but there were sketches, experiments with new techniques and many pictures concerned with other than the demands of strict social realism. Never non-representational, much of the work of the artists such as Gellert, Walts, Davies and Walkowitz was shaped by purely artistic ends.

There were a number of sketches from the model by such sculptors as Jo Davidson and John Storrs, by painters Alfred Frueh, A. Walkowitz and Sloan. Simple drawings were represented by a fine sketch of two pigs by Mahonri Young, a bold ink drawing of a horse and hack by Frank Walts, a sketch of a dog by Becker and a portrait head by Picasso which appeared in September of 1916. Hugo Gellert drew a number of stylized pastorals. Boardman Robinson contributed an excellent drawing of an ape man which was used as a cover on an issue which featured a powerfully imagined illustration of "The Masque of the Red Death," also by Robinson. Ilonka Karasz, later well-known as a wall-paper designer, contributed a lively, stylized dancing girl reproduced in brilliant orange and black on the cover for December, 1915. A series of covers were made from the semi-abstract portrait heads done by Frank Walts of such famous actresses as Nazimova. These, too, were in brilliant color and suggested excellent poster designs.

There was little trace of the new movements which began to stir with the French influence, perhaps because the war interfered with the freedom of movement of ideas and artists alike. Sloan satirized the cubists with a drawing of "the crooked man" in cubes, complete with a cubist dog, cat and house. E. Gminska's drawings of Central Park and other landscapes were semi-abstract, and showed the influence of Cezanne and others. Late in 1917, the magazine printed a number of studies of the war by C. R. W. Nevinson. These were excellent but rather arbitrary designs of airplanes against the clouds, of searchlights, and of a machine-

gun squad done in a completely geometrical style which only partially assimilated cubist techniques, but succeeded in giving a strong feeling of the mechanized character of the war. The thin line drawings of Barber and others in the last year of the Masses' existence also reflected new techniques.

Although he did not begin to contribute until 1916, Arthur B. Davies supplied the magazine with a large number of compositions, usually nude figure studies, which were printed simply as designs. They obviously were done for the sake of beauty alone. "It is an art that is caviare to most," wrote Mather, "but very delectable to such as yield themselves to the mood."³⁴ Davies represented the Masses' art at its most poetic and certainly had to be accepted solely on the level of artistic pleasure.

Akin to the purely artistic studies were a number of drawings of the New York scene printed with the briefest of descriptive captions, and quite apparently admitted to the magazine on artistic merit alone. Such were a long series of George Bellows' lithographs and sketches, including an excellent prize-fight drawing used as a cover for the issue of February, 1915. One of the most violent of Bellows' ring scenes, "Playmates," showed two fighters stretched across the drawing pouring full-armed blows into each other. Another lithograph was labeled "At Petipas" and featured John Butler Yeats and Robert Henri against a crowded background in the famous little restaurant.

Sloan contributed a number of typical studies. One, entitled "The Bachelor Girl," was a carefully observed, selective sketch of a girl hanging up her dress at the end of the day. Nothing extraneous was present,

³⁴ Mather, "Some American Realists," Arts and Decorations, I, 14 (November, 1916).

and no comment was made or implied aside from the tender and careful observation of reality. "Education" showed a vital young girl in a middy blouse sitting on the roof against a city skyline of low buildings and flapping washing learning to smoke a cigarette from a rough-looking young man in a flat cap. Interpretation, if any, was left to the reader. "At the Top of the Swing," which was a cover picture for May, 1913, showed a girl swinging in the park while the loafers sat on the benches and watched. The adolescent girl had tremendous vitality, but there was no sly comment implied in the men's expressions, or any other special meaning given to the drawing.

Similar observations by Glackens, E. Gminska, Mahonri Young, Joseph Margulies, Cornelia Barns and others were printed from time to time. This kind of realism was touched with fantasy by Stuart Davis in a drawing of a church and church-yard with figures climbing the steeple, a cat leaping through the air and two lean greyhounds crossing the foreground printed over the caption "New Year's Eve." It was another only partially realistic drawing by Davis of a Hoboken dock which Dell used to illustrate his remarks about the special quality of the artist's private vision of life.

To some realistic observations, captions were supplied which gave them a certain social relevance. It may well have been this particular classification to which the younger artists objected. An obvious life sketch by Becker of a group of men shoveling snow into a wagon was captioned "Snow Men," and given the added point of "a popular winter pastime among the leisure class." A Davis drawing of a wild, upswept sky with a round circle for a moon showed a man and woman standing on a street corner. The woman looked back over her shoulder as the man gazed at the sky.

The joke supplied beneath was: He: "Gee, Kid, some moon tonight!"

She: "Yes -- I think that man that just passed was drunk." There could have been a connection between picture and caption, but the combination did not ring true. Sky, trees and the figure of the man did not fit.

More apt were drawings by Coleman of the Masses' office over the caption "Mid Pleasures and Palaces --," another Coleman of a burlesque house with a chorus girl dressed as an Indian singing "Oh give me back my place again -- T'row Lincoln off de cent!", a sketch by Sloan of an overdressed woman and her formally correct escort in a box at the opera over the words "The Unemployed," and a poignant subway scene by Becker of a tired family of four, given point by the caption "The Return from Play."

A somewhat similar use of realism was made by bringing drawings into service as illustrations for poems and stories. In some cases, the connection between picture and story was immediately apparent, but in others, the juxtaposition was not ideal and suggested a made-up combination. Such for example was a Eugene Higgins illustration for William Rose Benet's poem, "Revolution," which showed a gnarled visionary at a window. The relevance was there, but remote. The exact relationship of caption to picture was not always easy to discover. As Frank Jewett Mather wrote of Sloan, Higgins and Shinn: "They tamper a bit more than the rest of the realists with their discoveries. They spray it with wit, or pathos or satire or protest."³⁵ Such shading of reality led easily to the pointed caption. Many of the drawings were doubtless so skillfully matched with text that any conflict among editors was, and remains, masked for the reader.

35 Mather, Arts and Decorations, I, 14 (November, 1916).

Originating very close to realism were purely satiric drawings selecting and distorting sufficiently to ridicule pompous and false vanities. Most of the work of Cornelia Barns was of this kind. Her particular bete noire was the young man, against whose vacuous absurdities she directed her brilliant pencil. Men were not her only victims, however. In a drawing captioned "Was this the Face that Launched a Thousand Ships," she satirized a girl who might be taken for a flapper of the twenties leaning against a soda-fountain twisting a string of beads and grinning at two typical drug-store cowboys. The drawing was penetrating satire and at the same time irresistibly funny.

The first drawing of Bellows that the magazine printed in April, 1913 was "The Business Men's Class, Y. M. C. A.," a sketch of the instructor and assorted shapes and sizes of men exercising with dumbbells. There was a good deal of detail, but only where it was needed to make the satiric point. This drawing "is the first consideration of the animal since called Babbitt in his fatuousness and his pathos," according to a brief sketch of Bellows' work.³⁶ Becker, in "Society Cherishes the Doll-Baby Idea," a sketch of a young girl and a ghastly caricature of a lumpy and grotesque dress-maker pinning up a new dress, drew a more violent expression of satiric idea, following closely the kind of work done by the German social satirists.

Satire specifically on art made up a share of the contributions of this kind. Bellows and Henri both contributed sketches of juries, which ridiculed the pretensions of the academicians. Turner and Sloan poked fun at copyists in the galleries. Davis commented slyly on the

³⁶ Thomas Beer, George Bellows (New York, 1927), 20.

patron with a sketch of the lobby of the Metropolitan Museum displaying a sign "To the Morgan Collection." One girl said to the other: Oh, I think Mr. Morgan paints awfully well, don't you?" Morris Hall Pancoast included the public in his satire with an expressionistic drawing of a gross man peering at nudes in a gallery. The man said: "Whew, them artists must be sensual fellers!" Young quoted the Young Artist: "All that I have accomplished in art I owe to the struggle for the necessities of life." To which the cartoonist, a self-portrait of Young, replied: "That's the way to look at it, -- if the cost of living goes high enough, you'll be greater than Michael Angelo." All of these drawings had a relevance either to the magazine's social program or its artistic aims.

A glance at the old Life or any other humorous magazine of the time showed that the Masses was an innovator in reducing captions on funny pictures from the extended "he and she" jokes to one effective line, a method adopted by The New Yorker at a later date. Some few drawings were, however, just illustrated jokes. Below a Turner sketch of a man and woman appeared: She: "Who gave you that black eye?" He: "Who gives me anything? I had to fight for it." Glintenkamp's drawing of two skunks in a barnyard was supplied with dialogue: First skunk: "Have you contributed anything to the Foundation?" Second skunk: "What Foundation?" First skunk: "To investigate the cause of the smell around this section." Bellows sketched a languid housewife interviewing a black and beaming prospective servant: "But if you have never cooked or done housework -- what have you done?" "Well, mam -- ah takes yo' fo' a broad-minded lady -- ah don't mind tellin' you ah been one of them white slaves." Young's "cool sewer" cartoon was of this kind, as was his sketch of a radiant girl knocking on a door on the other side of which sat a

scraggly-whiskered man in a bare room: Opportunity: "Mike! Have you got \$5,000 handy? Now's your chance to make a million." The last two cartoons gave some indication of what a master cartoonist did to enlarge the simple illustrated joke to include a wide social reference. They also show how the joke was becoming less complicated, substituting freshness and originality for a stereotype.

Happily few in number were the elaborate allegories which were the specialty of Charles A. Winter. To lines from Shelley, Wilde or Swinburne, he sketched massive figures in frozen pseudo-classical poses. A man in the pose of the thinker, backed by his wife and two children, thought of an elaborate series of figures represented above his head. The lines quoted were Swinburne: "And shall ye rule, O kings, O strong men? Nay! / Waste all ye will and gather all ye may, / Yet one thing is there that ye shall not slay -- / Even Thought, that fire nor iron can affright." As Untermeyer said, Winter's drawings were "painted in syrup," yet in all the fakery, there was a kind of distorted and sentimental revolutionary spirit which recognized that truth and beauty could and should be united. Young occasionally essayed the allegory with drawings such as "When the World Comes Out of the Jungle," which showed a fountain in a garden scene with a pool labeled "Internationalism." The idea was there, but the drawing and feeling were an example of idealism at its sentimental feeblest.

By far the largest number of drawings represented the cartoon, the illustrated idea. With extraordinary power, concentration and feeling, a host of artists reacted to the life around them and simplified and pointed their conceptions so that indeed those who ran might read. From the little sketches by Sloan and Young which were scattered through the

text to the double-page spread and cover, these drawings carried the smashing attack of the magazine against its enemies which has been described in each chapter. Every technique and medium were represented from etching and lithograph to charcoal, pen or crayon sketch. Much of the most powerful was crayon as it had been used by Boardman Robinson and Cesare. Robert Minor, Becker, Sloan, Chamberlain and more rarely Young used this medium with telling effect.³⁷

Art Young was generally conceded to be by far the most effective cartoonist of the group. Although he had not the artistic power of a Robinson or a Bellows, he excelled in the dramatic presentation of an idea or a situation. His drawings were often very complicated in detail, yet unified in effect and tied up by caption so that an instantaneous impression was made, although a careful study revealed more and more. Perhaps the highest compliment that can be paid Young as a caricaturist is to say that despite the need for using conventional symbols of fat men, top hats and frock coats, and the obvious repetitive treatment of such features as the eyes, Young's figures never became stereotyped. Each was the product of the particular idea involved and subtly different from any other figure, despite the Young trademark which was instantly recognizable.

Cartoons rarely attain universality, tied, as they are, so closely to the particular situation in time; but so long as the economic and social conditions are recognizable, many of the pictures in the Masses will continue to have their effect. Some few are perhaps fit to survive as drawings as have the cartoons of Goya or Daumier. Such a quantity of excellent work in one place will continue to be a marvel for those who

37 For the drawings of many excellent cartoonists, see the specific references scattered throughout Chapters II, III, IV, V, VIII and IX.

can see the Masses. As a record of the time, they are unsurpassed; although naturally enough, they show only a particular side of the questions so burningly debated.

Many critics have suggested that the real strength of the magazine lay in the work of its artists, much of which was so effectively excellent at a glance that the text seemed to be secondary. This seems primarily a comment on the difference in medium. Whereas a picture can sum up a situation or an idea for immediate impact, it cannot develop a theme or relate it to a unified system of thought. As with apparently remote ideas, the text gave the true significance to many of the pictures, and at the same time allowed for a much wider variety than the casual page-turner would expect to be coherently possible in a unified magazine. If, as one reader suggested, the pictures represented "The inarticulate cry of anguish that humanity sends up,"³⁸ then the text made apparently individual protest meaningful - brought it within a pattern.

38 VIII, 25 (April, 1916). See letter from H. A. Haskell, M. D.

CHAPTER VII

LITERATURE AND REBELLION

The art of the Masses could be clearly understood with the twin reference points of social change and individual artistic problems. The literature, although generally susceptible to the same tests, was much more difficult to evaluate. The financial and cooperative nature of the periodical were of much greater significance to literature because the Masses coincided in time with the acceptance of a literary "renaissance" on the widest scale. Artists were limited, but writers soon had outlets for their work and many of them paid well or offered special prestige. In the literary revolution the Masses could have only a small share, although here too, the work they published had special vitality and interest.

"The fiddles are tuning as it were all over America.' This is a remark of one of the best, the youngest, and the most Irish of all good Americans, Mr. J. B. Yeats," wrote Van Wyck Brooks in 1915. "It is true that under the glassy, brassy surface of American jocosity and business there is a pulp and quick, and this pulpy quick, this nervous and acutely self-critical vitality, is in our day in a strange ferment. A fresh and more sensitive emotion seems to be running up and down even the old Yankee backbone -- that unblossoming stalk."¹ In that same year a volume of poetry, Edgar Lee Masters' Spoon River Anthology, actually became a best-seller. With the publication of hosts of thin volumes, the springing up

1 Brooks, America's Coming-of-Age (New York, 1915), 61.

of "little" magazines and in increasing critical concern with the "new poets," there seemed to be no limit to a phenomenon which was almost immediately dubbed a "renaissance."²

The year 1912 marked not only the reorganization of the Masses, but the beginnings of Poetry: A Magazine of Verse in Chicago, The Poetry Journal in Boston and the publication of The Lyric Year in New York. Other significant periodicals quickly followed: in 1913, the first of William S. Braithewait's yearly anthologies of magazine verse and Kreymsborg's The Glebe; in 1914, The Little Review; in 1915, Others; in 1916, The Pagan, The Poetry Review of America and The Seven Arts. With these literary and critical magazines, the Masses, with its diverse interests, could not be directly compared; but on a somewhat less exalted plane, the magazine was as truly a reflection of the literary spirit of the time.³

No completely satisfactory explanation of the sudden outburst has been given. The purely literary critics have pointed to such influences as Yeats and the Irish renaissance, the poetry of Rabindranath Tagore, the relationship of Theodore Roosevelt and Edwin Arlington Robinson, the ghost of Whitman or the self-starting influence of Harriet Monroe's Poetry and

2 The literary revival has been treated extensively in history and criticism. See Amy Lowell, Tendencies in Modern American Poetry (New York, 1917); Louis Untermeyer, The New Era in American Poetry (New York, 1919); Clement Wood, Poets of America (New York, 1925); Alfred Kreymsborg, Our Singing Strength (New York, 1929); Fred L. Pattee, The New American Literature (New York, 1930); Horace Gregory and Marya Zaturenska, A History of American Poetry (New York, 1946) and many others, including the standard histories of American literature and the memoirs of many writers of the time.

3 See Hoffman, Allen and Ulrich, The Little Magazine. This book is the first major study of these magazines and as such is of great value. The bibliographies are especially good, but insofar as the treatment of the Masses is concerned, the book must be used with caution.

the vast energy of Amy Lowell. More socially-minded critics have stressed the coincidence of the new literary work with the new spirit in politics and society in general represented by the progressive movement, Woodrow Wilson and the Socialists. A Marxist critic, V. F. Calverton, stressed the final revolt against the "colonial complex" and the last stand of individualism representing the petit bourgeois. The literary impulses are interesting, in some cases possible, but on the whole unsatisfactory as a general explanation. The social analysis is more convincing, but fails to explain the direct connection between literary work and the social milieu. With so complex a background, it seems inevitable that all factors must be combined and taken into account.⁴

Whatever may be the causes, in the direct and often crude language of the new poets there occurred a fresh and vital examination of American life in all its aspects. Revolt was a part of the new poet's creed: revolt in form, in diction, in content. Much of the writing (and for later literature the most important part) was obviously literary revolution typified by the Imagist movement led by Ezra Pound in Europe and Amy Lowell in the United States, and the controversy over the poetic merits of vers libre. Equally important for an understanding of the particular years was the revolt in life represented by the majority of the new voices and led by such poets as Louis Untermeyer, James Oppenheim and Carl Sandburg. A third kind of poetry more closely linked to tradition in everything except language continued to be ably written by such poets as Robert Frost and Edna St. Vincent Millay. All three of these tendencies were represented in the Masses.

In their own chosen province, social protest and revolution, the

⁴ See Chapter I for a brief summary.

Masses printed a great deal of verse, largely in traditional form, lacking great poetic excellence yet introducing new content and occasionally fresh and spontaneous language into American poetry. Realism and even naturalism entered poetry, usually to the accompaniment of some experimentation with free verse. Following no even pattern of development, the tone of the verse generally deepened and hardened during 1915 and 1916 to weaken again in the war year of 1917.⁵

During the first year of the reorganized magazine, sentimental heroics dominated the poetry of protest. Probably the best poem of this kind was from Arturo Giovannitti and was written in Salem jail where he was awaiting trial for murder as a result of his participation in the Lawrence strike. Entitled "The Bum," the poem was given a full page, and traced the progress of a slum victim to his bloody death in the street:⁶

And yet, and yet the thunderbolt
 Shall fall some day they fear the least,
 When flesh and sinews shall revolt
 And she, the mob, the fiend, the beast,
 Unchained, awake, shall turn and break
 The bloody tables of their feast.

Violently passionate, the sympathy with the "slum proletarian" was an excellent demonstration of the remoteness of revolution.

Rise then! Your rags, your bleeding shirt,
 Tear from your crushed and trampled chest,
 Flint in its face its own vile dirt,
 Your scorn and hate to manifest,
 And in its gray cold eyes of prey
 Spit out your life and your protest!

5 A discussion of hundreds of poems, when compressed within a few pages, must inadequately represent both excellencies and weaknesses. This deficiency is partly corrected by an anthology of Masses and Liberator verse, May Days, edited by Genevieve Taggard. The two magazines were not separated, however, and as anthologists' must, much was sacrificed.

6 IV, 15 (January, 1913).

More "literary" and even more remote from revolutionary reality, Harry Kemp, the "hobo poet" saluted Shelley as the inspirer of revolt against the System. William Rose Benét contributed to early issues two poems about prostitutes, strained in diction but fairly free in their treatment of the subject. Generalized poetic rebellion against the indifference of God and long poems celebrating the strength and beauty hidden under the vile surface of the city were typical of "revolutionary" poetry. A poem of three eight-line stanzas on "Saturday Night" by Louis Ginsberg said:⁷

Down through the passionate street an infinite glory is streaming,
Touching the restless pageant with glamour and light.

Such exalted rhetoric marked the worst kind of verse printed by the magazine -- neo-romantic to say the best for it.

More effectively, but still in general terms, Louis Untermeyer, in a sonnet entitled "Wake, God, and Arm" concluded:⁸

Where art Thou, God, these torn and shattering days?
Where is Thine excellent wrath, Thy powerful work?
Still -- Thou art still -- impotent and absurd;
A cautious god, feeble and fat with praise.
Thou too, arise and arm! Why shouldst Thou be
Keeping with Death, this black neutrality.

James Oppenheim ended a poem dedicated to revealing the thin veneer of "Civilization" with an invitation to partake of the bitter Truth:⁹

7 VIII, 22 (March, 1916).

8 VI, 11 (December, 1914). The sonnet, which was not dominant but appeared from time to time, made use almost entirely of the Italian form, perhaps because the two-part organization was intellectually easier to use despite its greater technical problem.

9 V, 16 (August, 1914).

Let us not be afraid of ourselves, but face ourselves and confess what we are:
 Let us go backward a while that we go forward:
 This is an excellent age for insurrection, revolt, and the reddest of revolutions

These men were serious and technically competent, their subject was a new part of the times, yet they remained "poetic" rather than revolutionary.

When the Masses' poets abandoned generalities, they discovered their best subject-matter in the specific observation of particular places, persons and events. Here it was that they developed realistic and naturalistic description of an America which had remained observed, especially in poetry, with the partial exception of Walt Whitman. Untermyer, for example, retold a conversation with a jewelry buyer who carefully ignored politics, Mexico, hard times, the Ludlow strike and other disturbing matters:¹⁰

.....
 He was a medium-sized man, with thin brown hair and pinkish cheeks,
 And he was always smiling.
 Yet I felt that this man was going to bring the revolution --
 Bring it quicker -- make it bloodier --
 With his hard, careful apathy, and his placid shrugging unconcern.

Here the generalization followed with at least emotional logic a skilfully drawn portrait obviously sketched from living reality.

Similarly, Rose Pastor Stokes anatomized the thoughts of a waiter; Richard Bland spoke for a plain clothes slugger; Freda Kirchway described a soap-box orator and his effect on a Saturday night crowd; Carl Sandburg contributed his vicious attack on Billy Sunday; Max Eastman wrote a long ballad on Wat Tyler; Fred Ashfield sketched with great economy a moving monologue of a father in a bar whose small son had just died

10 "A Customer," V, 15 (June, 1914).

as a result of a thoughtless blow; Dorothy Day lovingly revealed two small children on Mulberry Street; and Miriam deFord sent in a tribute to Joe Hill, the I. W. W. Organizer who was executed in Utah.¹¹

Occasionally, these portraits and interpretations took on real poetic power. As an example of vivid naturalism, Ruth True described with effectiveness an ancient woman in a slum:¹²

A Woman, once, dealing and taking blows,
A child in some unthinkable far dawn,
Suckled in streets that to her death send up
Bloat laughter and this stench.
.....
Cornered but venomous, she holds with eyes
Of livid, smouldering hate, in strange delay
The great implacable white Lord of Death,
Baring her teeth and keeping him at bay.

The poems which attempted to deal with a strike or the dilemma of the workers tended again toward the general, but held to essential realities. M. B. Levick's "Ludlow" was an inept but passionate response to the strike, given a new effectiveness by the use of free verse which removed the jingling that plagued similar poems in the metre of Henley or Tennyson. The same redeeming freshness marked other poems which treated new subject matter in everyday language. Irwin Granich's "The Three Whose Hatred Killed Them" dealt honestly with premature rebellion; Edmond McKenna's "After the Strike" served as a tribute to Pat Quinlan and his wife

11 VIII, 14 (February, 1916). This poem was typically sincere, yet suffered from the usual disadvantages of proletarian or any other "tributes." The diction was sterile, the imagery was dead and the feeling was the direct inheritance of romantic poetry. Yet the celebration concerned a worker and revolution, which was new.

12 IX, 49 (July, 1917).

after he was in jail;¹³ Witter Bynner discovered pauper's graves in "God's Acre;" both Florence Mastin and Seymour Barnard wrote observantly of tired workers in the subway trains; and Hortense Flexner observed the coming of spring from the worker's viewpoint, although the imagery of the wind "Tugging like tiny hands at my skirt" was more romantic than real despite the stress on the women's being bound to her machine unable to look out "lest a snapping thread swing free."¹⁴

A series of excellent less definitely proletarian studies appeared at various times. Eunice Tietjens contributed "The Drug Clerk," an ironic juxtaposition of a callow adolescent clerk against the wonders of a prescription department. Jane Burr sent in three sketches, realistic and tender, of an old Negro cook. Mary Aldis told a gently satiric story of a barbershop patron who read Dante and thanks to a firm Calvinist training refused the life offered to him by the manicurist and departed regretfully to find another shop. Helen L. Wilson wrote expressionistically of a statistical clerk. Clement Wood contributed a long psychological study of the isolation of a woman who had married a silent husband. Frederick Booth wrote an ironic comment on the relative merits of post-hole diggers and an artist if they were to change places. Florence K. Mixer sent in a sharply observed interior of "A Greek Coffee House" which shut out the summer night. Arthur Davison Ficke contributed an excellent free verse poem entitled "Tables" which contrasted the former

13 VI, 16 (April, 1915). This poem was another excellent example of the marring of a poem by passages of exalted eloquence.

14 VI, 18 (May, 1915). The problem of imagery for the new poetry was very great, as the entire work of the Imagist movement suggests. The supposed imagery of the worker usually emerged dangerously close to sentimentality and the cliché.

sanctity of the altar with the modern significance of the cafe tables across which ideas and life flowed.

All of these were in search of a truth about people and about the world around them. Perhaps Jean Starr Untermeyer best summed up the goal of the Masses' poets, too high to be obtained, but always to be reached for:¹⁵

Sometimes, when I hear people mouth the word "toleration,"
I am moved by a fury, and a kind of pity too.
Because I know they have run too long with Compromise,
That girl of easy virtue,
Who yields to all with a slack smile,
And weakens her paramours by their quick and musty victories.

How different they who seek Truth,
She whose radiant virtue is a beacon in strange places.
No man can wholly possess her;
But they become strong who follow her searching footsteps;
Strengthened by that slow and rigorous pursuit --
And the hope of her shining surrender.

The weakness of the Masses' poetry, and indeed much of that of the vaunted "renaissance," was that far too many contributors were unaware, as the Imagists suggested, of the rigorousness of the search for poetic truth and excellence. Here was a major difference between the art and the poetry. Perhaps the poets, too, needed the continuous critical judgment of their fellows which the artists found in the meetings.

A serious critical problem was posed by the introduction of the worker and his life into poetry. Should the poet place consideration of subject above the art of poetry? In verse as in art, the Masses showed that the vision and skill of the artist was an indispensable minimum requirement. Efforts to "proletarianize" were not enough in themselves. Irwin Granich, consciously striving for the non-bourgeois approach, came no closer to the worker in "MacDougall Street," than did Ruza Wenclaw in

15 "Tolerance and Truth," VIII, 16 (March, 1916).

"Hills." Granich wrote:¹⁶

Bill, pipe all those cute little red dolls' houses.
 They're jammed full of people with cold noses and bad livers
 Who look out of their windows as we go roarin' by under the
 stars
 Disgustingly drunk with the wine of life,
 And write us up for the magazines.

Wenclaw's brief poem was obviously removed in point of view:¹⁷

Tired, sombre beasts.
 They lie sprawled along the horizon.
 On their backs stars rest.
 Through the lonely night, the coke-ovens
 (Altars aflame with sacrifice)
 Burn at their feet.

The first sounded proletarian, but wasn't. The second verse was frankly the observation of poetic awareness dealing with factories. Neither was written by a real poet.

Vachel Lindsay, certainly a poet, was farther removed from reality by fantasy, despite the revolutionary subject matter in "Mice,"¹⁸ than was C. E. S. Wood, also a real poet, in "A Song of Beauty"¹⁹ which was a straightforwardly poetic treatment of pity for the worker cut off from nature by over-powering insecurity. Arturo Giovannitti, in "When the Cock Crows," written in memory of the murdered I. W. W. organizer, Frank Little, wrote an extended piece of exalted rhetoric which came from a mediocre poet who wanted desperately to represent the masses, but it was by no means as effective as Carl Sandburg's "Choices," which represented the poet first and secondly the revolution:²⁰

16 VIII, 10 (May, 1916).

17 IX, 3 (July, 1917).

18 VII, 21 (October-November, 1915).

19 VIII, 12 (June, 1916).

20 VII, 19 (June, 1915).

They offer you many things,
 I, a few.
 Moonlight on the play of fountains at night
 With water sparkling a drowsy monotone,
 Bare-shouldered, smiling women and talk
 And a cross-play of lives and adulteries
 And a fear of death
 and a remembering of regrets:
 All this they offer you.
 I come with:
 salt and bread
 a terrible job of work
 and tireless war;
 Come and have now:
 hunger
 danger
 and hate.

As Trotsky said of the workers' poetry, a "pock-marked" art was no art at all, and therefore unfit to exist as art for workers or anyone else. The Masses' editors, with their respect for craftsmanship would, it seemed, have agreed. But limited material available to them and weaknesses of taste, the former more certainly true than the latter, forbade a significant voicing of the revolt against industrial conditions in their verse. They wanted good poetry of protest, and the magazine allowed the poets the same privilege as the artists. Poetry was given the same featured significance on the page as an article, story or drawing. They showed that poetry was important to them.

The fact of importance did not, however, necessarily guarantee good work. On the basis of the evidence of the magazine, poets do not make, perhaps, the best revolutionists. Prominently featured on the back cover with a Eugene Higgins illustration, William Rose Benet made this point with "Revolution":²¹

21 VIII, 24 (January, 1916).

Anyone can write Revolution -- Revolution is written
 By pale young men with the new conventional mind;
 Though it causes, indeed, no such havoc 'mid humankind
 As Samson's did when the Philistines were smitten.

It is easy to preach Revolution - Revolution in pink reviews,
 Or flourish a Phrygian cap from the top of a steeple:
 But if ever it came to an uprising of the people,
 How many pale poets would stand in the leader's shoes?

The Irish rebellion answered the question in favor of the poets in one case, but for the Masses' poets, Benet's question was hard to answer.

That the poets were trying to deal with realities rather than conventional rhetoric and sentiment was also shown by their war poetry. Even before war broke out in Europe, an attempt was made to generalize the American experience in Mexico. The unthinking or imperialistic patriot was a favorite victim of poetic attack, and patriotism was contrasted with the realities of death in two poems on seventeen victims of the landing at Vera Cruz. Mary Carolyn Davies' "When the Seventeen Came Home" reported the funeral procession in New York:²²

Nobody laughed when the seventeen came home.
 It is one of our customs to kill men.
 But we always treat them with reverence after we have done it.
 We send them out to die. But we use a colored flag, to show
 ourselves that it was not murder.
 Murder is better, I think. Murder without lies.
 Nobody laughed when the seventeen came home.
 But perhaps, under the flags, the seventeen laughed, when they
 saw the people who had sent them out to die, standing in rows
 with their hats off, being sorry.

The outbreak of war in Europe touched Americans less closely at first and was received variously, but with surprising strength and understanding. Louis Untermeyer recounted the experience of "The Old Deserter," who had been a German shop foreman and a socialist. The dazed old man was

22 V, 17 (July, 1914).

made into an effective symbol of what happened to hopes for peace and to European socialism. Gertrude C. Hopkins, in a poem on "Death Masks," contrasted the reality of man's facial expression when killed in battle with the sentimental image of the peaceful hero. Edmund McKenna, in a full page poem entitled "Prelude," brought vividly to life the changed world which resulted from war for an ordinary man, his wife and child -- "The morning wind has grown a hawk's strong claws."²³ And Clement Wood followed the initial line, "Yes, he'll enlist -- he'll leap at the chance!" with a bitter analysis of the tempting opportunity to escape the drudgery and bitterness of everyday life into the gambler's chance of war:²⁴

If you think eleven servile hours a day, six days a week,
A slatternly wife, a tableful of children all mouths,
A sodden Sunday, and then the long round again,
Can bind him to sanity and peace,
You do not know your brother --
You do not know yourself!

The same realism was applied by Elizabeth Waddell in "The Tenant Farmer," which revealed the romantic power of the war idea to the shiftless, discouraged man.

The Masses' poets were especially concerned with the effect of the threat of war on their own lives. Untermeyer composed several long poems before 1917 which were awkward but deeply felt records of his feelings. "To a War Poet" contrasted the sagging, slippered poet with the brutal reality of war to those who fought: "The Laughters" revealed the city in spring with the gayety of children blotted out by the evil of war

23 VI, 7 (October, 1914).

24 VI, 6 (November, 1914).

headlines;²⁵ "Truce" dealt intimately with an island of love which momentarily blotted out the war. A later contribution from Untermeyer on war was less subjective: a sonnet he entitled "Portrait of a Patriot";²⁶

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"Why, look," he warmed up to his noble text,
 "Look at this country's great neutrality;
 And how we've prospered in it. If that strife
 Continues through this summer and the next,
 No one can tell how prosperous we'll be . . .
 Just one more year -- and we'll be made for life!"

A cross-section of the best war poetry printed by the magazine would include two fine poems by Carl Sandburg: "Buttons," an ironic comment on the real meaning of the moving of pins on a newspaper war map; and "Murmurings in a Field Hospital," the gently tender, yet poignantly ironic Sandburg at his best.²⁷ Arturo Giovannitti contributed a fine, intense poem on a soap-boxer, a girl and a towering building against a background of marching soldiers and a fearful group of listeners. The poem was entitled "The Day of War," and was one of the few to create, by developing the soaring upright glory of the three, successful symbols for revolution.²⁸ Martha Gruening sent in a vicious free verse attack on the

25 VI, 9 (June, 1915). This long free verse poem had a nice sense of structure, but the moment emotional reaction to the war entered, the language failed to ring true. It was strained, and left the subject rhetorically general by failing to find the precise image. This was a common weakness of much of the free verse of these years.

26 IX, 8 (January, 1917). The flatness of this unpoetic propaganda was a trap lurking for the Masses' poets. And into it they fell. The forced rhyme "strife," however, does stand out to show how close the poets came to everyday speech even when using so arbitrary a form as the sonnet.

27 VI, 10 (February, 1915) and VI, 10 (May, 1915).

28 VIII, 20 (August, 1916).

American patriot entitled "Prepared," which was an excellent example of the use of living language without any slip into false "poetic" diction.²⁹

Mary Carolyn Davies wrote many brief epigrammatic verses, of which "Necessity," was a good example:³⁰

Shooting what looks like an enemy
And then finding out that it was somebody's father --
This would be a pitiful thing, except that it is necessary
In order to maintain the dignity
Of various slices of earth.

Of course, not all of the war poetry was free verse, and the traditional expression of feeling and idea was also much in evidence. Eastman's sonnet, "Europe," was a typical example:³¹

Since Athens died, the life that is a light
Has never shone in Europe. Alien moods,
The oriental morbid sanctitudes,
Have darkened on her like the fear of night.
In happy augury we dared to guess
That her pure spirit shot one sunny glance
Of pagantry across the fields of France,
Clear startling this dim fog of soulfulness.

But now, with arms and carnage and the cries
Of Holy Murder, rolling to the clouds
Her bloody-shadowed smoke of sacrifice,
The superstition conquers, and the shrouds
Of sanctimony lay their murky blight
Where shone of old the immortal-seeming light.

The war poetry had a strong but limited effectiveness. By 1915 it was clear that the Masses group was being overwhelmed in the growing feeling for war. Unlike the poetry of the people, the war subject was obviously farther removed from reality. In prose, the editors could fight, but poetry was generally marked by retreat to other subjects.

29 VIII, 13 (March, 1916).

30 VI, 8 (December, 1914).

31 IX, 29 (December, 1916).

The use of traditional poetic forms, such as the sonnet and the quatrain, and of traditional content, such as nature and love, raised questions as to the revolutionary nature of the magazine in its poetry. The fact that the editors, as distinguished from outside contributors, tended strongly toward the traditional position sharpened the question. So far as the controversy over form was concerned, free verse against the older forms, the position of proletarian supporters was fairly clear. There was a direct contrast between living revolt and purely literary rebellion. "The literary rebels, for example," wrote V. F. Calverton, "who became the advocates of free verse as opposed to conventional verse must not be associated with proletarian writers, who are opposed to the society in which we live and aim to devote their literature to its transformation."³²

Much more difficult to answer was the question of content. The same questions of dogma versus freedom, of the freedom of the individual versus the needs of society, which followed the Masses in all of its campaigns applied directly to the poetry. As the editors themselves saw the problem, rigid distinctions about what was and what was not suitable for a poet who believed in revolution had nothing to do with selection. The question was simply one of poetic excellence, and since the poet was inevitably and by definition subjective, the effect of the natural world and of love were as important as factories, city slums and slogan-making for the revolution. Unlike pictures, poems could not be pointed with captions to emphasize their contribution to the propaganda of liberty.

To Untermeyer, the distinctive characteristic of the poetry of the

32 Calverton, The Liberation of American Literature, 461.

time was the probing desire for new knowledge of all kinds, which marked the generality of writers. "In every field -- from the artistic to the political -- one sees this restless searching," he wrote, "this effort toward new values, toward ascertaining larger possibilities."³³ He gloried in the enlarging horizons of poetry which he believed to be removed for the first time from the aristocratic patronage of "salons" and "erudite groups." If the American people were at last being set free from echoes to look keenly at all parts of actual life, then this was a poetic revolution and a revolution in life; and verse of all kinds was admissible if it had any poetic quality or revealed any phase of life, nature or spirit which was democratic property. Obviously, this revolt of the spirit could not be limited to changing forms, and there was a place for traditional forms infused with new life. So too, there was a place for a new content or old content which demonstrated new understanding and reality.

Eastman based his poetic theory on the distinction between science and poetry. Science, he said, provided the ultimate in abstract intellect typified by mathematics. "And as the extreme of science is the vanishing up of all generalizations in a single truth," he wrote, "so the extreme of poetry is to descend from the generality proper to the very existence of language and engage in the diversities of life. Poetry ushers us out of the library. It is a gesture toward the world."³⁴ Science, said

33 Untermeyer, The New Era in American Poetry, 14.

34 Eastman, The Enjoyment of Poetry (New York, 1921), 147. The book is indispensable for the editor's poetic criticism and standards as well as for an understanding of his own poetic writing. The Masses, of course, reflected other editors as well, notably Untermeyer, Dell and to some degree Reed. See especially the comments on poetic selections in Untermeyer, From Another World, Chapter III.

Eastman, had discovered the perfect prototype of the poet in studying the flatworm which moved from no known reason of instinct or desire except the urge for experience. The poet wished "to issue from the bondage of habit and receive the world," and poetry was not about experience, it was actually experience itself.³⁵

Poetry, defined in this way, was the product of leisure, as Eastman was aware. Only the revolution in society could bring adequate leisure to all men, but while revolution was being obtained through science, poetry should continue to help men reach out for the world through experience, looking to the future for "the age when it will again be loved by many kinds of people, and rise to its heights upon a wide foundation."³⁶ A corollary of the dream for wide-spread poetic life stressed the communication necessary to poetic experience. Poetry, if it were to be published, "ought to occupy itself with those rhythmic values which may be communicated to other rhythmic minds through the printing of words on a page," Eastman claimed. "It ought to do this, at least, if it pretends to an attitude that is even in the most minute degree social."³⁷

Here was a poetic policy which stressed traditional forms and metres and allowed the fullest range of subject. Granville Hicks, writing as a Marxist, said that the poets of the Masses were only half revolutionary, splitting their minds into two parts, of which the important was love and nature, while the unimportant portion consisted of rhymed slogans or pathetic descriptions. The proletarian poet, said Hicks, "wants the same

35 Eastman, The Literary Mind (New York, 1931). For the theory of the flatworm as the type of the poet see 193-4.

36 Ibid., 169.

37 Ibid., 216.

spirit, the same knowledge, the same impulses to inform all his work."³⁸ Such dogma, the Masses' editors rejected from the beginning. They clearly believed that the difference between society and the individual was a fact to be ascertained equally well by science and poetry. Both were important, but economics, politics, social science and revolution were one thing to be approached through science; and individual experience, love, nature and the feeling of the individual about society were something else to be approached through poetry. Dogmatic monism was impossible to them, despite the fact that they found unity in variety through the common impulse toward liberty of all men.

Following their critical theory, it was only natural that the editors would print many poems dealing with love and passion. Partly, the motives were feminist, but even more fundamentally, love was a major part of experience and demanded poetic treatment. Harry Kemp wrote on the entrance of a captive Zenobia to Rome; Lydia Gibson, among many poems she contributed, wrote of a mummy named Esoeris in the museum and of Artemis in contrast to the maternal idea of Mary. John Reed contributed a sonnet about "Love at Sea," contrasting the unstable and meaningless water with the imperative definiteness of his love for a girl. Floyd Dell celebrated the desire for cool hands, a laughing mouth, dew-wet knees and the peace of love. Marjorie Allen Seiffert sent in a column of finely done "Singalese Love Songs" which all dealt with desire and its denial.

A new frankness and honesty marked most of these contributions. At its worst, frankness might result in such verses as Clara Shanafelt's "To Virtuous Critics":³⁹

³⁸ Hicks, The Great Tradition, 327.

³⁹ VIII, 8 (December, 1915).

Isn't it well that I make poems
Of my delicate lusts and sensations,

To soothe me with their warm
Rich-colored folds,
Like a proud Paisley shawl
When I am old?

Such pallid trifles were matched, however, by so truly honest an approach to forbidden subjects as marked Helen Hoyt's "Menaia," which obviously strove for poetic realization:⁴⁰

Silently,
By unseen hands,
The gates are opened,
The bands are loosed.

Unbidden,
Never failing,
In soft inexorable recurrence
Always returning,
Comes mystery
And possesses me
And uses me
As the moon uses the waters.

Ebbing and flowing
Obedient
The tides of my body move;
Swayed by chronology
As strict as the waters;
Unfailing
As the seasons of the moon and the waters.

Among the innumerable tributes to passion appeared a few genuine and moving poems. Helen Hoyt, Lydia Gibson and Jean Starr Untermeyer all contributed their skill and deep feeling. If their poetry lacked ultimate distinction, it was because they were actually minor poets, and the subject of love has strict limits for all but the greatest. The introspection which marked later poetry was anticipated and expressed in freer

⁴⁰ VI, 16 (September, 1915). As occasionally occurred, this was one of an entire page of poems by the same poet.

form and language than would have been believable ten years earlier.

"Deliverance" and "Birth" by Jean Starr Untermeyer, for example, dealt both realistically and symbolically with the final inadequacy of love to free a woman's spirit and the observed birth of a sister's child. The emotional perception was deep, and the poetic translation of feeling was much more than mediocre.⁴¹

The treatment of nature and truth as traditional subjects for poetry also made up a part of the Masses' poetry columns. Untermeyer's "The Poetry of Earth" and Eastman's much-anthologized "At The Aquarium" were featured in the number for December, 1912, and throughout the publication of the magazine, there appeared nature poems. There was a considerable reflection from the Imagist experiments, but no outstanding examples of experimental verse. Typical of the experimentalism of the time was Lydia Gibson's "Yellow":⁴²

A memory -- where?
 Pine-trees, on a ledge of rock, over the lake.
 (The lake . . . ?)
 Sunset, yellow and green.
 You threw a pine-cone into the lake, and laughed, very softly --
 (Laughed . . . very softly?)
 Suddenly the sun was gone.
 We walked home, hand in hand.
 (. . . a memory?)

As Edgar Lee Masters remarked, especially of the many women poets, "The heady wine of this new interest in poetry started the half-educated,

41 VII, 16 (October-November, 1915) and VIII, 11 (June, 1916).

42 V, 21 (May, 1914). None of the major Imagists except Amy Lowell was represented in the Masses. Lowell gave them a weak, lengthy semi-narrative entitled "The Grocery" written in a mildly interesting but completely flat and unpoetic dialect. Her "The Poem," which appeared in the issue for April, 1916, was more effective, but still slight.

the half-formed to take their pens and their paper."⁴³ Masters called them "mushrooms;" the Masses printed far too many of them in a department at the back of the magazine called "Orchids and Hollyhocks," which began to appear in April of 1917. Floyd Dell was responsible for this department, and he made an attempt to print as many things as possible, in order to give striving poets a chance to appear. The magazine printed twenty-nine poems in July of 1917 and the number rose to thirty-five in the final issue of November-December, 1917. Poetic taste should have run herd on the selections more carefully, but the motive was commendable if the results were not universally either poetic or interesting.

Some few nature poems of quality were printed, such as James Oppenheim's "The Runner in the Skies," Eastman's "Dune Sonnet" and "Water Colors" and a most unrevolutionary Edwin Justus Mayer sonnet which remarked "How futile is all thinking against this!/How exquisite is the air grown, and the skies."⁴⁴ As the magazine pointed out, there was no reason to send contributions, conventional or otherwise, to the Masses if other periodicals would pay for them. New poets had a market in Poetry and other magazines. If they dealt, even experimentally, with traditional poetic subjects, the poet's opportunities included, by 1915, most magazines. Unlike the artists, the poets could publish elsewhere. The Masses offered neither money nor strictly literary prestige. As a result, they could publish less fine work and were often at the mercy of the inferior because they believed in poetry and continued to publish what they could get.

⁴³ Masters, Across Spoon River (New York, 1936), 348-9. From among these generally inadequate poets, the Masses found occasionally excellent contributions, but most of the little verses were quite bad.

⁴⁴ IX, 33 (September, 1917).

As might be expected from a magazine which demanded the right to have a sense of humor, some of the best things in the Masses were light verse. An anonymous "Lines to a Pomeranian Puppy Valued at \$3,500" ended:⁴⁵

You don't sweat to struggle free,
Work in rags and rotting breeches --
Puppy, have a laugh at me
Digging in the ditches.

John Amid's "The Tail of the World" was an intricate and amusing transmutation of the class struggle into an attempt to swing the world by its tail. Clement Wood mocked the prim daring of the new poets in "Song of the Free Poet." Ralph Cheney similarly laughed at himself in "I, A Minor Poet," and Eastman contributed a clever piece of whimsy contrasting the significance of the poet and the dog in "To a Mad Dog" who, but for the closeness of a tree, would have made an end to poet, poetry and all. Mary Carolyn Davies sharply satirized college education as producing copies of men who were copies of books. Joel Spingarn's expert "Heloise Sans Abelard" concluded:⁴⁶

O passionate Heloise,
I, too, have lived under the ban
With seven hundred professors,
And not a single man.

Louis Untermeyer contributed what started out to be a passionate love poem filled with luscious description, but ended:⁴⁷

My sweetheart's body is a cry,
A poignant and resistless call;
It almost makes me wonder why
She hasn't any mind at all.

⁴⁵ V, 9 (November, 1913).

⁴⁶ V, 17 (February, 1914).

⁴⁷ VI, 14 (May, 1915).

Untermeyer's "Portrait of a Supreme Court Judge" was a sharply edged epigram:⁴⁸

How well this figure represents the Law --
 This pose of neuter Justice, sterile Cant;
 This Roman Emperor with the iron jaw,
 Wrapped in the black silk of a maiden-aunt.

Taken as a whole, the Masses' poetic contribution was excellent as a demonstration of the spirit of the time and the editors' share in it. Two hundred and twenty-three poets and versifiers were represented during the five years from 1913-1917. Among these were an impressive number who seemed at one time or another to be significant new voices: Mary Aldis, Laura Benét, William Rose Benét, Witter Bynner, Mary Carolyn Davies, Babette Deutsch, Max Eastman, Arthur Davison Ficke, Hortense Flexner, Lydia Gibson, Arturo Giovannitti, Robert Hillyer, Helen Hoyt, Harry Kemp, Vachel Lindsay, Amy Lowell, James Oppenheim, Carl Sandburg, Marjorie Seiffert, Eunice Tietjens, Jean Starr Untermeyer, Louis Untermeyer, Elizabeth Waddell, Margaret Widdemer, C. E. S. Wood and others make an astonishing list for a magazine avowedly dedicated to social revolution.

The few lasting poems are, to be sure, surrounded by inferior verse. The "renaissance" was short-lived, and the Masses had peculiar difficulties as a result of its financial and radical nature. The brief glory of the poetic revival, with its hearty and lusty approach to realism and the actuality of America, fell a victim to the same forces which defeated and destroyed the magazine and the liberal spirit of the pre-war years. However fascinating to the critic and social historian, this verse had to yield to the expatriate influence of Pound and Eliot, who were more truly poets, however opposed they might be to the dream of a democratic

⁴⁸ VI, 20 (February, 1915).

revival which filled the Masses' editors with hope.

In prose, the Masses made a historically more important contribution. As John Chamberlain described the early years of the twentieth century following the major work of Stephen Crane, Hamlin Garland, Frank Norris and Jack London, there was "a decade of underground work in the arts a desert stretch in the totality of American literature."⁴⁹ Because the fiction of the magazine fell naturally into the general classification of social realism and naturalism which was to dominate American fiction, the Masses was admirably suited to aid in beginning the return from the desert. The subject matter of this realism was generally related to the major concerns of the magazine, but fortunately, the treatment was for the most part truly fictional, adapting the propaganda motive to the necessities of form.

Most notably in the short story, which tended to follow the slick surprise pattern set by O. Henry, but also in historical fiction and the so-called problem novel which dominated the early years of the century, realism was largely superficial and concerned with ideas and impressions rather than a deeply felt, starkly written reproduction of the actual American scene. The industrial system with its labor force was scarcely represented at all, except in such a solitary success as Upton Sinclair's The Jungle of 1906. A vivid condemnation of the first decade was written by John C. Underwood in 1914:⁵⁰

American illustration, like the American short story during the last ten or fifteen years, has shown a distinct retrogression;

⁴⁹ Chamberlain, Farewell to Reform, 118.

⁵⁰ John C. Underwood, Literature and Insurgency (New York, 1914), iv-v. The Masses' editors would certainly not have accepted Underwood's patriotic and racist theories, but with his cultural analysis, they were in complete agreement.

American essays and critical articles in magazine acceptance have become a minus quantity; American fiction serialized has been sacrificed to fashionable and generally uninspiring literary importation from abroad; the ethics of commercialism and cheap mediocrity have infected the earlier ideals of inspiration and service in which these magazines [the muckrakers] were conceived and founded; and, last and most conclusive and damning proof of all, American poetry in many of our leading "literary" magazines has reached an irreducible minimum of slush and near-slush . . . that is as much a living lie and denial of the racial temper and smothered aspiration of the American people of yesterday, today and tomorrow as any Wall Street inspired, bought-and-paid-for prostitution of our Metropolitan newspaper press.

The revival of the American short story began during the second decade and was based on the journalistic techniques of the earlier naturalists. The Masses made a solid contribution to the new vitality of the form, accepting as they did, work which could not be sold easily to the typical magazine of large circulation.

After Eastman became editor, the magazine began slowly to add fiction until 1916, which was their peak literary year both in quantity and quality. The kind of realism represented ranged all the way from gentle observation to the most violent naturalism. The largest number of stories concerned women's plight, the general problem of marriage and the relationship of the sexes. Mary Heaton Vorse's work, unlike her labor reporting, was of the gentler sort, and she typified this aspect of the Masses' fiction. In December, 1912, Mrs. Vorse contributed the tale of a man who learned to manage his spoiled wife through buying a boat which only stopped leaking when no attention was paid to it. In later stories, she wrote, usually in Irish dialect, about occurrences which she observed or was told about. "These stories," she wrote later of her development as a writer of fiction, "had to do with the life around me. They had character, personality and event, but little plot. And they were hard to sell.

So gradually I wrote a more stylized sort of story that would sell."⁵¹ The Kasses, of course, got the ones that did not sell elsewhere. In "The Story of Michael Shea," "Tolerance," and "The Happy Woman," gentle sympathy for the disillusionment which life inevitably brought marked her work. Except in "Tolerance," in which the conflict between an A. F. of L. father and an I. W. W. son was one of several threads, there was no treatment of the problems of labor, although most of the characters were workers from the lower middle class.

Floyd Dell wrote a few stories in addition to his other contributions to the magazine. He was especially interested in the problems of adolescence in both boys and girls and the challenge of youth to the young girl. The influence of the romantic was strong in most of these stories, but Dell tried to deal with young love as the expression of physical necessity. The girl was middle class in "A Perfectly Good Cat." Like the household cat, she prowled away at night to celebrate her youthful drive in a Bohemian apartment shared with other girls. In "Adventure" a school-teacher's illicit love for a divorced man was balanced too perfectly against the love of danger which her brother cultivated by learning to fly. In "The Dark Continent," a conflict developed between the German mother and her daughter with the father a helpless spectator. An actual fight with the mother preceded the girl's triumphant departure with her "bad" friend. "The Ways of Life" examined the psychology of an adolescent boy with a bad heart whose love for adventure in books led him to reach up to the high shelf of the library in an apparently fatal gesture. The fatality was successfully implied rather than stated.

51 Vorse, Footnote to Folly, 41.

In these stories, Dell did not seem to be personally involved, and the general impression was that of groping toward story telling. In "The Beating," however, he made emotionally manifest his concern with the dawning awareness of life.⁵² Unlike his other stories, the characters were drawn from the masses and dramatically isolated by being placed in a girl's reformatory. Told through a girl from the city slums, the story dealt with her dawning realization of human dignity and aspiration as she heard and watched another girl beaten to break a spirit which refused to give way to tears or any recognition of pain. "She had seen this thing, and had been unmoved, because she had not realized it First she felt -- with a keenness greater than she had ever felt in her own body -- the pain of those blows on Jeanette's flesh; and more than that -- a sensation she had never experienced -- the humiliation of them. She felt the pain, the shame, and wanted to cry out; and then she felt with a shock the violent mastery which Jeanette had put upon herself to keep from crying out." Although flavored with melodrama, the story was a successful effort to work through naturalistic techniques to a broadly significant idea.

Beginning in 1916, there was a series of stories on the effect of pregnancy and poverty, usually contrasted with middle class lack of understanding of the moral issues involved. Helen R. Hull contributed stories of this kind, usually focussing on the spectator who became involved in a servant's tragedy. "Unclaimed" was a brief dialogue between a doctor and a middle-aged widow about her maid, a woman approaching middle age, who had an illegitimate baby but refused, even after the birth, to recognize

52 V, 12-14 (August, 1914). The story was vividly illustrated by Sloan.

that she had been pregnant. The inheritance of web toes by the child directed the blame to the dead husband, but the older woman, like her maid, would never confess to the reality. The story was particularly skilful in its implication of facts which were never completely stated. "Usury" was the expertly controlled story of an old maid of strong religious convictions who tried to force her servant to marry the man who had "ruined" her three years earlier, despite the true, if inarticulate, love between the girl and her present fiance. Love won the day, and the story could have been placed anywhere if it had not been for the emphasis on sex and the ultimate reversal of conventional moral values. As it was, the realization of the psychology of the girl and her working-class fiance was excellent, and the fictional subordination of the moral dilemma to the necessity of character analysis of the old woman was completely successful.⁵³

In "Till Death --," Helen Hull dealt with the reaction of a working woman with a self-centered and brutal husband to a further pregnancy which ended her chance for freedom and any opportunity of education for her favorite daughter. The story was told through dialogue with great economy and a frank honesty of speech both in the father and the company doctor who explained the pregnancy to the woman. It was a moving story, ironically concluding that the woman must accept her fate "for the children."⁵⁴

Naturalistic methods applied to family and sex relations were basic to many other stories printed in the magazine, although none of them used the detail in sexual matters which has often typified naturalism.

⁵³ VIII, 5-8 (September, 1916).

⁵⁴ IX, 5-6 (January, 1917).

Of particular merit were Harris M. Lyon's "Ella Dies,"⁵⁵ a dramatic, sordid account of the death of a woman of thirty from syphilis contracted from her husband; Mary White Ovington's "The White Brute,"⁵⁶ Helen Forbes' "The Hunky Woman," which revealed through melodramatic events but real characters the contrast between the actual feeling for her children of the Polish immigrant and the impression made on a number of observers.⁵⁷

"Jones," by G. C. M. (Gertrude C. Moss), showed a meek man who was married and betrayed, and whose only positive act was suicide in an ironic attempt to satisfy the romantic code for revenge. "Shelley," by the same author, dealt with the seduction by a rich man of a cheap girl in a bad hotel, frustrated by her admiration for the poetry of Shelley, which the seducer was using to calm her down and prepare her for the kill. Most typically naturalistic of all, a brief story by Helen Hull entitled "Yellow Hair" pictured the return to a violently emotional Black Portuguese of a sly and sensual white woman by whom he had had a child and been deserted for another man.⁵⁸

A general interest in the internal psychology of the characters was typified by the printing of three stories by Sherwood Anderson, all three of which later went into Winesburg, Ohio. Dell had helped Anderson sell his first novel, and undoubtedly the contact helped the magazine to

55 VI, 8-9 (June, 1915). All of the characters were poor and filled with a stolid ignorance. The situation emerged naturally from the conflicting drives of inadequate people caught in a morally vicious environment.

56 VII, 17-18 (October-November, 1915). See Chapter V, 186.

57 VIII, 12-13 (May, 1916).

58 VIII, 15 (February, 1916).

get the stories. "The Book of the Grotesque" eventually became the opening chapter of Winesburg, and the anti-dogmatic suggestion that grotesqueness was the result of seizing one of many truths was admirably suited to the Masses' position on both life and politics. "Hands" and "The Strength of God" were two of Anderson's best stories, and the Masses' editors featured them both with their tender and sensitive perception of the inner conflict, especially sexual, of ordinary people and eccentrics alike.⁵⁹ ✓

Eastman, in his one venture into fiction during this time, investigated the psychologically abnormal in "A Lover of Animals."⁶⁰ The material for the story came from a summer experience with a landlady who was active in the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, but Eastman turned the idea in a gruesome direction by imagining that the old lady was chiefly interested in the killing of helpless animals. As he developed the story, a small boy was involved and was rescued at the last moment from the gas chamber by his father, who began to suspect that the old woman was not quite sane and hardly fit to care for his child.

Mabel Dodge carried the psychological investigation of love to its most complete expression in her stories, "A Quarrel" and "The Parting."⁶¹ The materials were also drawn from personal experience, but showed a marked resemblance in treatment to the battle of the sexes as it was exposed by D. H. Lawrence. "He was the source of her life and she looked to him to

59 "The Book of the Grotesque" was published in February, 1916, "Hands" in March and "The Strength of God" in August. The early spring and summer issues of this year were almost entirely literary in content.

60 IX, 17-19-21 (April, 1917). See Eastman, Enjoyment of Living, 392-3.

61 The two stories appeared in September and October of 1916. See Luhan, Movers and Shakers, 435.

animate her sense of living and to enliven her inert force," wrote Mrs. Luhan, "and she hated him in advance for being the only element in her inexperience that could work this magic for her, changing all things vivid -- causing her forces to flow out -- strong and even." The writing was expert and the parallel to Lawrence was astonishingly close, but such intricate emotionalism must have puzzled good socialist readers.

As befitted a proletarian magazine, the Masses also dealt fictionally with both the toiler and the out-of-work slum dweller. The bum was especially present during the early years of publication. Mary Field entitled a story "Bums" and told of the melodramatically contrived meeting of a rich and tuberculous young man with the poor and tuberculous victim of his father's bakery. The rich man was presented in completely unreal fashion, but Chucky, the bum, was unsentimentally and vividly drawn. The same accuracy of line and richness of detail marked Leroy Scott's "Soap and Water," which characterized a drunken woman with humor and pathos. James Henle's "Nobody's Sister" combined realism with sentimentality in a story told by one young man to another of an encounter with a prostitute. The facts of the girl's life were realistically treated, as were her thoroughly sentimental attitudes. Only the narrator did not ring quite true.

John Reed, who contributed more stories than any other writer, was largely a reporter of the superficial aspects of life wherever he happened to be. In a series of vivid sketches and stories, he reproduced the color and life of his surroundings with gusto and typically romantic distortion. A series of stories dealt with the streets of New York and Reed's encounters with bums and prostitutes while wandering around the city. "Another Case of Ingratitude," "Seeing is Believing," "The

"Capitalist" and "Broadway Night" were filled with sharp observation and a facile reproduction of the speech and attitudes of the characters he met. Again the narrator was false. The bum who was fed in "Another Case of Ingratitude" told the narrator at the end of the meal: "You see You just had to save somebody tonight. I understand. I got a appetite like that too. Only mine's women." To which Reed added: "Whereupon I left the ungrateful bricklayer and went to wake up Drusilla, who alone understands me."⁶² The whimsical note sharply reduced the effectiveness of the realism.

The frank and honest language of the drunken old woman in "The Capitalist" and the brutal truth of her proposition to the young man were balanced by a mock-heroic attitude of the man which vitiated the reality and turned the story into a wryly amusing comment. After the story of an old man who had come down to selling the "Matrimonial News" outside the Broadway theaters and briefly indicated encounters with three varying prostitutes, Reed ended "Broadway Night" with: "This mad inconsequentiality, this magnificent lack of purpose is what I love about the city. Why do you insist that there must be reason for life?"⁶³ The division between Reed the revolutionist and Reed the romantic was far greater than was typical of the magazine.

The stories which he sent back from Mexico, "Happy Valley" and

62 IV, 17 (July, 1913).

63 VIII, 19-20 (May, 1916). See John Hicks, John Reed for an apologia and explanation of the growth of Reed from romantic to proletarian hero, from country boy in New York to burial in the Kremlin. For the typical process of rejection which led to Reed's first submitting a story to the Masses, see page 86 of Hicks' book.

"Jimenez and Beyond," were filled with brilliant local color centered around the supporters of Villa and the hangers-on of the revolution.⁶⁴

A penetrating, if again romantic, interpretation of the Mexican character was marked by dialogue and event which anticipated the writing of Ernest Hemingway with its universal impression of violence combined with rigidly artificial Latin behaviour.

A better story was the later "Endymion, or on the Border," which dealt with a drunken, depraved but kindly doctor at Presidio, Texas. Apparently drowning the sorrow of a dead wife and an abandoned career, the doctor was worshipped by the local cowboys and Mexicans as a combination of "awful goodness" and "just suffering like hell all the time." The Christ parallel was not stressed, but Reed was obviously trying to give symbolic meaning to a representative of mankind so apparently degraded.⁶⁵ His writing was improving, but he abruptly stopped contributing fiction to give his entire attention to politics and revolution.

Other writers were more successful than Reed in dealing with the actual proletarian. James Hopper wrote a naturalistic challenge in "The Job," an account of the nauseating life of a "geek" who ate live rats in a Paris exhibition.⁶⁶ The key description was made dreadfully effective

⁶⁴ These two stories appeared in July and August of 1914. The line between journalism and fiction is particularly hard to draw on this kind of writing, which puts together a string of anecdotes and observations in a semi-fictional manner.

⁶⁵ IX, 5, 6, 8 (December, 1916). Mention should also be made of Reed's "A Daughter of the Revolution" which appeared in February, 1915 at the same time he gave an inferior story to Metropolitan.

⁶⁶ IV, 7-8 (March, 1913). The "geek" has recently reappeared in American fiction in Nightmare Alley by David Gresham. The live victims, however, were chickens not huge sewer rats as in Hopper's story.

by putting it into the mouths of two gamins who, skeptical at first, were convinced that the show, if not the participants, was genuine. The story was not pointed simply toward nausea, but was used to illustrate the awful position of the man who was forced to take such a job to support his little daughter and himself. This was naturalism with a vengeance, but far removed from America and normal realities.

Lincoln Steffens came closer to American labor in a story of the mating of a labor leader and his proud wife, "A King for a Queen."⁶⁷ Super-imposed on the picture of the strong leader, were scornful comments on the laboring man's rejection of natural strength and ability for the business agent, the "practical" man. The leader was close to the Jack London version of the superman, but the shift from drama to business in the unions was clearly stated and at least partially explained through the fictional character.

The most consistently effective stories with a proletarian background were submitted by Adriana Spadoni, a woman who lived on the East side and attended a few Masses' meetings without ever becoming an editor. Technically, her stories were almost plotless revelations of character and environment. Skill, understanding and deep sympathy filled her work and made it movingly real, although the writer, with one exception, remained the observer rather than the participant. Her first story, "A Rift of Silence," was a combination of psychological analysis and naturalistic treatment of environment and human drives.⁶⁸ The Jewish family was suggestively realized; the dreadful overcrowding and heat of the

67 IV, 13-14 (April, 1913).

68 IV, 12-13 (February, 1913).

tenement reinforced the symbolic value of the sound of breathing which haunted the young hero. Within a brief story, tenement life, the effect of fatal illness on poverty, the loving and intimate Jewish family, the psychological distortion of a sensitive boy, the job in a slaughter house, the contrast of the rabbi's unworldliness with reality, the consequences of marriage in poverty, the effect of old age on earning power, and finally the grief and relief of death were all woven into an extraordinary and gripping unity. The manipulation of symbols was particularly effective.

Three stories submitted at roughly yearly intervals dealt with the loneliness of women. "The Seamstress," which told of a poor woman's assistance to a chronic alcoholic she had known and loved from childhood, contained elements of melodrama suggested by a far-off plantation background, but the melodrama was subordinated to the revelation of the realities of the woman's bitterly lonely life.⁶⁹ Without direct statement, the man's ego-centricity and wealth were contrasted with sacrificing love and miserable poverty. "Real Work" was an observation without comment or moralizing of an elderly couple. The man retreated from modern living into clipping and filing excerpts from the newspapers with the passionately devoted subordinate help of an uneducated wife. "A Hall Bedroom Nun" simply traced the observed effect on a lonely working woman of a young, newly-married couple's occupancy for a few weeks of a room in the same house. Written with beautiful restraint, the woman's eager defense of the realities to be touched by observing people was in sharp contrast to the austerity of her life. Again deep sympathy for humanity dominated the story.

69 IV, 15-16 (September, 1913).

In "Foreladies," the theme was the effect of machinery on the woman worker, told as the first-person experience of a woman who got a job sewing cuffs.⁷⁰ The machine, the Monster, even dominated the human master, the forelady, but the forelady was successful because she had lost her sense of humanity and was dedicated to the machine. From this loss of humanity, the girl was saved by being fired, but not until she had understood why, under the resistless speed of the machine, her fellow workers could not retain pity for each other and human warmth. It was an extraordinarily evocative story.

The migratory worker received excellent treatment in at least three stories. Jacob R. Perkins, in "Remember San Diego," dealt with two I. W. W.'s in San Francisco after the brutal, if temporary, suppression of radicalism in San Diego.⁷¹ The struggle against the "system" resolved itself into a melodramatic attempt by one of the two men to prevent the army enlistment of an unemployed man and a fight with an army officer who shot the I. W. W. and wrapped his hands in the flag as he fell. Although the essence of the story was melodrama, the recognition of this by the central character, the sardonic and bitter tone and the crisp realism of the dialogue raised the story far above ironic fire-works. It was a statement of the reality of melodrama.

The same reality applied to two excellent stories by Austin Lewis who, from the viewpoint of a confidant, told two tales of the adventures of a migratory worker. In "The Way of the Worker," the story told was that of a waitress and migratory laborer who drifted into living together

70 IX, 5 (March, 1917).

71 V, 9 (May, 1914).

in San Francisco. When the man left with the season, the girl committed suicide. Neither character was in the least romanticized, and the genuine grief of the man was unsentimental and terminated by the hard reality of his existence.⁷² "Lucky Sweasy" dealt with a migrant who was jailed for a robbery he did not commit and freed with his season's earnings confiscated. The plot was arranged through the rivalry of a sheriff and a chief of police, each of whom had arrested a man; but the effectiveness of the story lay in the complete reality of the chain of events and the revelation of the helplessness of the worker.⁷³ Lewis contributed a further story, "Contra Bonos Mores," which dealt with the solidarity of the poor Italian workers in time of trouble or illness, and their treatment of a member of the group on Teresa Street who violated the group mores. Irwin Granich also investigated the actual nature of living on the East side in a melodramatic but poignant story of the night of his birth.⁷⁴

These short stories were among the first which might be called proletarian. Almost their only predecessors were stories of the farmer by Hamlin Garland and the naturalism of Stephen Crane. The techniques of naturalism were here used with sympathy and understanding to contribute toward the exposition of a corrupt and misery-breeding society. The tales were notably free from socialist propaganda, unlike the novels of Upton Sinclair and a part of the work of Jack London; yet Spadoni, Perkins,

72 VIII, 14-15 (October, 1916).

73 IX, 10-12 (January, 1917).

74 X, 27-8 (November-December, 1917). Granich also was represented by an ironic story of New York at night concerning a half-crazy old minister and his attempt to salvage an old sea-captain from drunkenness. The tortured mind of the old man was set against the most brutal naturalistic background. The story's point was confused, but it had power and sympathy.

Lewis and Granich were all interested in the fullest possible reconstruction of the actual conditions which affected the victims of society. As Calverton said of the proletarian writers, they were more interested in social revolt than in literary revolt. Although Adriana Spadoni did make use of the plotless story which was to become so important as typifying a new literary method, the emphasis of none of the writers was on form as such. They were interested primarily in telling the truth about an almost untouched segment of life, and they were successful.

One further class of stories dealt with war. Americans had so little first-hand acquaintance with modern warfare that there was little fictional treatment of the actual fighting. Only in James Boyle's "The War Smell" was there an intimate realization of the battlefield, and this story was about the Philippine War. Printed in the war issue of September, 1914, it was a vivid account of the development of a war psychosis resulting from battle experience, the growth of an inseparable horror of the aftermath of battle and the thoughtless patriotism of the girl who waited at home. The dream of the girl eventually became a part of, rather than an escape from, the horrors of the war smell.⁷⁵

A story by Reed, "Mac -- American," and one by Granich, "The Treacherous Greaser," sketched the brutal type of the American soldier on the border during the trouble with Mexico, showing the hatred, prejudice and violence of the Americans' attitude toward the Mexicans. Neither one was exactly a story, rather a report of a conversation, but both had power and succeeded in showing militarism at its worst, with army life revealed through its most vicious representatives.

⁷⁵ V, 8 (September, 1914).

Edmond McKenna's "Hero" was a successful if ordinary story dealing with a completely un-heroic man with a bad stomach who, to the surprise of his superior fellow passengers, rescued his insane charge when their ship struck a mine in the English channel. The war was only a remote background. Arthur Bullard came closer in a journalistic account of a French cafe near a flying school where combat fliers recovered from combat fatigue as temporary instructors. This was an early and accurate, although somewhat dressed up, treatment of war and aviation.⁷⁶ "The Game" by Marie Van Saanen told of the murder of a Parisian child by his playmates during a war game. The child was persecuted by his fellows because his mother, who had already lost one son, refused to let him play war. James Hopper gave an imaginatively realized account of a journalist's trip to the front line trenches which was exposition rather than narrative.

The particular problem of the socialist in the war was the subject of Ernest Poole's "Submarines," an account of a journalist's ride through Germany on a troop train. The intellectual helplessness of an ex-playwright whose "engine had stalled," was contrasted with the latent power in the peasant who continued to conduct cautious propaganda among his fellow soldiers against war and for socialism.⁷⁷ Reed, in "The World Well Lost" reported a conversation with a Serbian socialist leader who had become an officer in the army and had lost his faith in and almost his memory of the civilized pre-war dreams. Again not actually a story, the clear exposition of the difference between agricultural and industrial

⁷⁶ VIII, 11 (March, 1916).

⁷⁷ VI, 8-9 (April, 1915).

socialism and the effect of the war were realized fully in character. A melodramatic, but vivid story of the Russians on the Austrian front dealt with a famous singer who was supposed to sing the men to a final effort, but succeeded instead in deliberately singing them to a ruthlessly suppressed mutiny against their officers.⁷⁸

It was far too early for war naturalism to reach America, but the Masses' writers were striving toward that goal. They simply did not yet have enough facts, and the most vivid realizations of war were in serious articles rather than in a fictional form. The trend of fiction was anticipated, however, if less expertly than in other subjects closer to home.

The Masses had no reason to be anything but proud of its success. For 1916, Edward J. O'Brien, the short story critic, in ranking national magazines which had printed an average of over fifteen percent of stories of distinction, listed the Masses fifth with sixty-six percent. Scribner's, Century, Harper's and Bellman were ahead, and only nine magazines in the country rated more than thirty-five percent. O'Brien's judgment still seems valid. Most of the stories were not, perhaps, "great" stories, but they were excellent, and they anticipated in content and treatment one major direction in which story telling was to go in the nineteen

78 Will Levington Comfort, "Chautonville," VI, 16-17 (August, 1915). This story was technically interesting in its use of a style which became commonplace both in poetry and prose much later. "We were worn to buckskin and ivory, while here was a parlor kind of health -- so clean in his linen, white folds of linen, about his collar and wrist. His chest was a marvel to look at -- here in the field after weeks in the Carpathians. We were all range and angles, but this was a round barrel of a man, as thick as broad, his lips plump and soft, while we for weeks had licked a dry faded line, our faces strange with bone and teeth." Not even Stephen Crane had used a harder, clearer, more exacting imagery. The entire story did not sustain this level.

twenties and thirties.⁷⁹

The editors of the Masses personally played an important part in the revival of the American theater which began during the period of the magazine with the founding of the Provincetown Playhouse and the Washington Square Players. Before these groups had come into existence, Floyd Dell wrote a few satiric sketches which were produced at The Liberal Club for the pleasure of the members. Mary Heaton Vorse, Max Eastman, John Reed and Louise Bryant with George Cram Cook, Susan Glaspell, Robert E. Jones and Eugene O'Neill were among the founders of the Provincetown Players during the summer of 1915. When the group moved to New York into the stable on MacDougall Street, Floyd Dell contributed a play "King Arthur's Socks," to the opening bill, which also featured a play by Louise Bryant, "The Game," and most important of all, "Bound East for Cardiff," by Eugene O'Neill. The Washington Square Players soon devoted themselves primarily to productions of European plays, leaving the discovery of native American drama to the Provincetown Group. By 1920 the former were uptown, as was O'Neill's The Emperor Jones; the Theatre Guild was in the making; and a veritable revolution in American drama was underway.

The magazine itself did not contribute significantly to the new drama, but with its usual wide interests did print a few one-act plays.

79 Some mention should be made of the paragraph and the sentence as a literary form. The brief and pointed political or social comment has rarely been so skilfully and consistently handled as in the Masses. In selecting a "Pearl" from the press each month they anticipated the later use by the New Yorker, Time and other magazines of this method of ridicule. Howard Brubaker, who has changed his method very little since the last two or three years of the Masses, developed the one-sentence quip into a fine art. Both the sentence and the paragraph are too short-winded to achieve much but brilliance; however, in this characteristic, the Masses ranked very high indeed.

In 1913, the Masses published Frank Shay's "The Machine" and John Reed's "Moondown." The former was little more than a satiric sketch in three scenes in which two prostitutes trying to go straight were sent to jail, while a third, for whom a bondsman pimped, went free. Reed's play dealt with the need for the working girl to sell her virtue if she were to live. His heroine met a young poet who promised to come for her that night by moondown. When he failed to appear, the girl's roommate succeeded in using the disappointment to get the heroine to behave in what seemed to her a "sensible" fashion and accept a job with a floorwalker's favor as its price. The treatment was romantic and sentimental, but the basic conception was bitterly realistic.

In 1915, Edmond McKenna wrote a two-scene one-act play entitled "Repentance First," which satirized the religious fervor of a man and wife. Under the urging of an evangelist, the hero confessed to a crime he had not committed. While he was briefly in jail, his wife received enormous benefits from various philanthropic societies which she was regretfully forced to abandon when her husband came home. The exaggerated but effective realism of the first scene was inconsistent with the absurdity of the second; but the play was readable, and made its point.

Seymour Barnard, who was a facile writer of satirical light verse, contributed during 1915-16 a number of fantastic comic operas on such subjects as philanthropy, the press and the Hughes-Wilson campaign. Marked by clever variations in metre and form, the choruses were obviously Gilbertian in origin with the addition of social consciousness. The Friendly Visitors to the Poor in "Philanthropy" sang gleefully:

"We're summoned from the altitudes,/ We're called from cultured classes,/"

Because we've nothing much to do/ But meddle with the masses."⁸⁰ Such gentle, biting humor marked all of the "operas."

Three European plays were printed by the magazine. In August, 1916, a translation by Arturo Giovannitti of "Deliverance" from the French of Rachilde appeared. Emotionally but effectively, it dramatized the irony of the condemned prisoner who, concerned with his own death and the injustice of society, took a rifle to defend his prison when he was told that the Prussians had entered the town. In February, 1917, a smuggled copy of Miles Malleson's "Black 'Ell," which had been suppressed by the English censorship, was reprinted by the Masses. This play also dealt with the irony of war's effect. The young hero returned from France after a horribly successful raid on the German trenches to discover that he was to be decorated for his valor. In a violent, emotional climax, he went to pieces thinking of the similarity of his own position to that of the man he killed, the bloodthirsty patriotism of those at home, especially the girls, the country's reliance on the neglected poor in time of war and the position of the old men. He refused to go back just as the patriotic neighbor girl returned with a group of friends to cheer the hero. The play was excellent, although it is now dated. The final playlet reproduced was a Pierre Louys "Dialogue at Sunset" translated by Walter Adolphe Roberts. It was a typical Louys treatment of the seduction of a shepherdess by a young goatherd, dressed up as a natural mating in the name of Aphrodite.

Although with the exception of "Black 'Ell," the plays were not very good, it was significant that the magazine recognized the power of

80 VI, 16 (March, 1915).

drama as a form for carrying on their propaganda against the system. The magazine was mildly skeptical about the growth of a proletarian theater from the Provincetown group, although hopeful enough of this achievement; but the editors anticipated the significant revival of the dramatic form in the United States.

From November, 1916 until the magazine was suppressed, the Masses included a regular department of dramatic criticism by Charles W. Wood. Wood reviewed everything from Billy Sunday and Coney Island to the esoteric production of Nicholas Evreinov's "A Merry Death" by the Washington Square Players. Most of the reviews, of course, were of the conventional money-making plays of the season. Wood wandered freely and amusingly from topic to topic, but he was chiefly concerned with the falseness of the term "realism" as applied to most of the plays he reviewed, and the upside-down morality of the treatment of sex. His comments were much like G. B. Shaw's in their recognition that the commercial theater was filled with obscenity masquerading as morality. Wood never ceased to enjoy pointing out such falsehoods as the point of "The Man Who Came Back," which claimed that the girl could sink to doping in a Shanghai dive, but as long as she had not done that she could inspire the degenerate hero back to success.

Wood was by no means entirely in favor of a high-brow theater. He praised the work of the Washington Square Players, the Playwright's Theatre and others, but he did not hesitate to ridicule the affectation of many of their productions. He also attacked the production of "The Yellow Jacket," which called forth a counter-review by Dell in the same issue.⁸¹ He praised Clare Kummer's plays, the Hippodrome Ice Show

81 IX, 32-3 (March, 1917).

Annette Kellerman, Maude Adams in "A Kiss for Cinderella," Eugene O'Neill and John Galsworthy's "The Fugitive." The run-of-the-mill well-made comedy called forth little but scorn, and Wood's analysis was expert and shrewd, although he had a full recognition of the values in popular shows. "Lo, this is the life for the tired business man, and it smacketh not of Bronx apartments, where the limbs of his women must needs be skirted and they tread not upon glorified turn-tables," he wrote in Biblical parody, reviewing "The Century Girl." "Great is uplift and great are the words of them that speak of cultivating the people's taste. But greater yet are Dillingham and Ziegfield, who know what the populace will pay real money for I am one of the populace. I liked it."⁸²

Wood did hope that a truly radical theater would develop from the Provincetown group, and thought O'Neill had given them a fine start. But he believed that the successful playwright did not lose his ability to write with success, but rather learned to write too well, to turn out all the accepted tricks with a marvelous facility. When the war came to the United States, he advised such playwrights as hoped to do anything significant to put away their materials until after the patriotic jag was over. No real and vital theater could grow during the hysterical, herd-dominated time of war.

The Masses took no formal critical position for its reviewing of books, nor did the choice of books to review show any rigid sociological or critical dogma.⁸³ During the first two years, there was little

82 IX, 26 (May, 1917).

83 Floyd Dell was the chief reviewer, but his work was supplemented by Louis Untermeyer, Frances Anderson, Irwin Granich, Dorothy Day and one or two others.

reviewing of any kind, although in November, 1913, Louis Untermeyer discussed Lipmann's Preface to Politics and the controversial Hagar Revelly. He praised Lipmann's book generally, but remarked that the censorship controversy over Hagar Revelly was completely unwarranted, since the novel went no farther than an inexperienced journalistic realization of the surface of life.

When Dell joined the magazine, the attention to books which might be expected from the former editor of the "Friday Literary Review" of the Chicago Evening Post did not at first materialize. Although Dell did contribute an essay on Beard's An Economic Interpretation of the Constitution as justifying socialist skepticism of the conventional patriotic idea of the origin of the United States, and a fundamental criticism of Dreiser in "Mr. Dreiser and the Dodo," which reviewed A Traveller at Forty, it was 1916 before the book review section became important and prominent.⁸⁴

Two steps led toward the reviews: first, Lincoln Steffens wrote to the editors asking for a list of books to catch him up on his reading; and second, the institution of the Masses Book Shop led to reviews of selected books to increase sales. Steffens was answered in turn by Dell, Untermeyer and Eastman. Dell recommended a list which dealt largely

⁸⁴ Dell said that Dreiser's thought was a last survival of the mid-nineteenth century pessimism which culminated in social Darwinism. "It is absurd to quarrel with an artist about the means by which he achieves his effects," he wrote. "'Sister Carrie' justifies mid-nineteenth century pessimism; a book as good would justify Swedenborgianism, or the theory that we live on the inside of the earth. But when Mr. Dreiser comes to write about modern Europe he needs a modern mind. Sympathy isn't enough; it takes understanding." The same words might have been applied with equal point to later Dreiser criticism of Europe.

with Greek drama and civilization, Untermeyer ranged widely over poetry and belles lettres with interest as the only unifying principle, and Eastman recommended science and psychology. During 1915, Dell wrote a pair of essays on subjects which interested him, Joseph Conrad and the Riverside History of the United States. In June of 1916, he began to write regular reviews which appeared in the back of the magazine until it was suppressed in 1917.

The books reviewed were of many different kinds: Jung's Psychology of the Unconscious, Dreiser's The Genius, Shaw's Androcles and the Lion, J. D. Beresford's These Lynnekers, Wells' Mr. Britling Sees It Through, Braithwaite's Anthology of Magazine Verse for 1916, G. Stanley Hall's Jesus Christ in the Light of Psychology, Veblen's An Inquiry into the Nature of the Peace, Sinclair's King Coal, Russell's Political Ideals, Richardson's The Fortunes of Richard Mahoney and many others.

To such a diversified list, no one critical yardstick was applied. For fiction, the chief criterion was apparently truth-telling, the reality of life. "The old facile answers are unsatisfying; the facile new ones not less so," Dell wrote in a review of Sherwood Anderson's Windy McPherson's Son. "Perhaps there is no answer. But we must ask. And the writer who puts that question in intimate and vivid terms of the lives of men and women, completely, fearlessly, candidly, is such an interpreter of American life as we have need of."⁸⁵ Anderson represented for Dell an intimate touch with reality, as did McFee in Casuals of the Sea, reviewed in the same issue. George Moore, in contrast, was dismissed simply because he failed to touch the vivid reality of life in The Brook Kerith.

85 IX, 17 (November, 1916).

Criticism did not end here, however. Dell pointed out to Dreiser that he was a rebel against conventional literature, but that he had failed to write the Promethean tragedy, the splendid failure of the great effort for mankind, that Dreiser's admiration for splendor and pity for frustrated things had evaded the major theme. "Why," Dell asked, "do you not write the American novel of rebellion?"⁸⁶ This criticism was made somewhat more specific in a later review of Gilbert Canaan's Mendel. The modern critic needed to "discover the roots and trace the growth of fiction, clear away the mass of Victorian tradition about novel-writing, analyze the efforts and tendencies of the modern period, and show the real significance of the new Rolland-Nexo-Beresford school."⁸⁷ The recognition of a new kind of writing which later came to be called proletarian by American critics was implicit, but Dell did not develop the theme at this time. Instead, there was a strong pull toward the romantic, as in his suggestion to Beresford that he write about the artist, poet, vagabond or criminal because, as the Hero must, they had escaped the family and its ties.⁸⁸

Dell was much interested in the new discoveries of psychology and immediately recognized the significance of Jung's theory of the dream and

86 VIII, 30 (August, 1916).

87 IX, 28 (May, 1917).

88 Dell's interest in the new psychology was apparent. The final issue of the magazine, however, had a strong proletarian slant in a pair of reviews by Dorothy Day of Sinclair's King Coal and Anderson's Marching Men. Dell also stressed the importance of everyday work, rather than sex, as a theme for the novel in his review of The Fortunes of Richard Mahoney.

its relation to mythology. He pointed out in his review that Jung had successfully replaced a narrow emphasis on sex with a wider attention to life as a whole by substituting the life force for the libido, and that reducing the importance of infantile decisions had focussed the attention of psychology where it belonged, on the present. Jung's dream theories, he found especially valuable, but characteristically pointed to the active principle by suggesting that the next investigation should be directed to the exact point of decision within the dream which resulted either in destruction or salvation. Dell was consistently given to asking the next question rather than accepting the book read, however valuable it might be.

He was also much interested in following the investigation of the myth. He equated the divine struggle in man with the Promethean myth and tried to show in a review of the first volume of The Mythology of All Races that it was the Rebel, the Martyr and the Hero who had given us our civilization and been enshrined in the myth. In reviewing G. Stanley Hall's book, Dell agreed with the general theory of the identity of the Jesus mythus with others, but he did not believe that a dead myth could be resurrected. To the rebel, the important point was that old Gods died and were replaced by new. Such a theory of religion gave powerful support to the thinking of social rebels. Dell did not, however, canonize either Karl Marx or the Socialist State.

"In a word, the revolutionary critic does not believe that we can have art without craftsmanship;" wrote V. F. Calverton, "what he does believe is that, granted the craftsmanship, our aim should be to make art

e man as a thing of action and not man serve art as an escape."⁸⁹
this conception, the Masses' reviewers would have agreed. With the
option of a Conrad review entitled "A Vacation from Sociology" the
ical writing was concerned, not with literary matters as such, but
a life and truth.

In its literary efforts, the Masses was fully consistent with its
l revolutionary policy, a new society and a new individual. Free from
absolute reliance on either one or the other, but without sacrificing
olutionary goals, they published what they believed to be good and
comed any material which seemed to lead toward freedom. Eastman was
omy as to the future of magazine writing:⁹⁰

Barring the hope of some profound revolution, which may
give us all a chance to earn a quiet, useful living in a
reasonable number of hours without frenzy. I see no glories
ahead for magazine literature. It will continue to be as it
is. The big circulation-getters with a gift for keeping
everything interesting though ordinary, will continue to buy
up and dilute the best talents of the country; a few amateur
magazines, which cannot afford to pay for anything, will con-
tinue to exhibit a lower average of talent, but a more poignant
variety of art; every once in a while a native popular genius
will ride over all these tendencies of the time; and so on,
until some deeper change than any of us can imagine.

e Masses fitted admirably his description of the "little" magazine, and
s anticipation of the future was justified by subsequent developments.

Calverton, Liberation of American Literature, 460-1.

Eastman, Journalism versus Art, 85.

CHAPTER VIII

WAR

From 1912 through 1917, the career of the Masses was colored and conditioned by the threat or the reality of national wars. In literature and art, in each of the campaigns waged by the magazine, war intruded. In August, 1914, the first World War began its bloody course of destruction and chaos in Europe. The United States, at first remotely ensconced behind the Atlantic wall of water, moved through two and a half years of increasing tension to an active participation. As a part of the successful prosecution of the war, the civil liberties of all radically dissenting groups were snuffed out, and a repression began which finally destroyed the hope and unity of the liberal-radical cause, so strong during the early years of the decade. The progress of the inexorable movement toward war and its consequences was told in the Masses. In steady opposition to the slowly evolving popular hysteria, the magazine gave an insight into the complexity of apparently simple causes and contributed a viewpoint on many issues far in advance of historical developments.

Before the war in Europe began, when the attention of the United States was directed to the possibility of intervention in Mexico, the Masses' policy toward armed conflict was that of official socialism. Since nationalistic wars had succeeded in Europe during the nineteenth century, the socialists had come to the conclusion that, with capitalism in control, wars of the future would be characterized by an imperialistic struggle for markets which would increase the wealth and power of a small

group of capitalists at the expense of the workers. Socialism was not inherently a pacifist creed, but as Morris Hillquit wrote: "The altered attitude was not due to a change of heart as much as to what the Socialists conceived as a change of the character of modern wars."¹ Socialism remained militant, but it transferred loyalty to an international rather than a national cause and condemned nationalist wars. "The warlike have met together and abjured the horrors of war," Eastman wrote of the Socialist War Congress at Basle in November, 1912. "The revolutionary proletariat has declared war against war, and their soft declaration is worth fifty million echoing resolutions of humanitarian societies Remember these words, for they mark an epoch in the martial history of the world."²

Despite the obvious fact that Europe was thoroughly prepared for war at the very time of the Congress, socialists the world over believed in the efficacy of their strength to prevent an actual European struggle. They did not cease to fight for peace, but they believed they could attain it, or at least prevent conflict by refusing to participate. That war was horrible and useless became a universal commonplace. H. J. Turner sketched "The Victor in the Balkans" for the Masses, showing a skeleton in the attitude of "The Thinker" watching the pygmy armies.³ Sloan drew "The Common Caws" revealing birds picking a soldier's skeleton.⁴ This

1 Hillquit, Loose Leaves from a Busy Life (New York, 1934), 147.

2 IV, 7 (January, 1913).

3 Loc. cit.

4 IV, 13 (September, 1913).

treatment was accepted without comment either by the magazine or its correspondents.

Eastman did have some premonitory reservations, not about the peace in Europe, but about the psychology of war. To accompany a George Bellows cover of a spear-wielding Zulu crouched over a dead soldier, the reproduction of a violent and effective painting, the editor wrote a note on the beauty of war. Bloody war of the kind Bellows pictured was aesthetically pleasing only to the savage, but even to the refined and godly, war had attractions. "They fight in the interest of a beautiful idea merely," wrote the editor, "and it is this that gives great aesthetic value to the intellectually ridiculous and morally disgusting great mess that they make upon the earth justified, in the minds of these so-called righteous people, by a certain glorious aspect that their enterprise has for the imagination."⁵ A class war, by contrast, had none of this imaginary heroic falsehood. "Some day this will not be so," said Eastman. "Some day there will be thousands saying, Let us have peace --- but if there shall be war, let it be war not of nation against nation, but of men against men, struggling to some real end."⁶ An anti-imperialist premise derived from socialism and a psychological analysis which rejected the dogma of a single economic cause were joined to an orthodox campaign against militarism and a carefully reasoned support for an international organization to shape the Masses' reaction to war.

During the early months of 1914, the Masses' cartoonists began their attack on militarism. Chamberlain drew two languid figures watching soldiers marching by outside a window. One remarked: "It checks the

5 V, 18 (January, 1914).

6 Ibid., 19.

growth of the undesirable classses, don't you know."⁷ Morris Hall Pan-coast sketched two officers lounging on a soft divan above the caption "Kept."⁸ Becker showed silk-hatted commanders of big guns above and below a cliff firing human "Ammunition."⁹ When the declaration came, the artists and writers were ready to do their part in vivid condemnation of the war.

Mark Sullivan, shrewd observer of the times, commented on the remoteness of the European war to the average American:¹⁰

Even when the first of the declarations of war came, July 28, we thought of conflict between Austria and Servia as little more than "another mess in the Balkans," of a sort that had been intermittently chronic as long as any of us could remember. When Germany declared war on Russia, August 1, and the New York Stock Exchange appraised its significance by closing for the first time since 1873 (for a period that lasted more than four months -- it was reopened on December 12), a few of the more sophisticated among us were impressed; but even yet many Americans paid only casual attention to it, as something far away, and not necessarily conclusive -- at all times we thought of most of the European nations, especially those east of the Rhine, as constantly shaking mailed fists at each other. American newspapers had a phrase, "saber-rattling," with which they were accustomed to explain that sort of thing, and dismiss it.

To the Masses, however, with its background of international socialism, its intelligence and its vivid imagination, there was no hesitation or dismissal. The September, 1914 issue and the two which followed were filled with an interpretation of the war and its meaning to Americans.

Becker did the cover for September. Against a lurid orange background, a ghastly, nude blue figure with a torch in one hand and a smoking

7 Ibid., 8.

8 V, 10 (February, 1914).

9 V, 12-13 (June, 1914).

10 Sullivan, Our Times (New York, 1933), V, 48-9.

bomb in the other danced wildly over Europe. It was anarchy personified, with an evil smile and glittering eyes, if the battered silk hat had not given away his true identity. The caption read, "Whom the Gods Would Destroy They First Make Mad."¹¹ One of the most brutal cartoons to come out of the war was Sloan's double spread of a capitalist in a chair and the terrible half-figure of a soldier dragging his trailing intestines across the page. Looking into the ghastly face, the capitalist said, "You've done very well. Now what is left of you can go back to work." In his hand, the master held a medal.¹²

Eastman's lead editorial, entitled "War for War's Sake," began by deploring the waste of blood, heroism and sacrifice for a useless end. With the complete rejection of a nationalist or racialist interpretation of the war blaming the German barbarians, the editor nonetheless anticipated the overthrow of the ruling classes of Germany, a feudal survival. They would, he said, be replaced by the more hesitant and cunning middle classes. Actually no real gains could be won because the conflict was simply between ruling groups over the division of economic spoils. One hope remained: "I do not believe a devastating war in Europe will stop the labor struggle," Eastman wrote. "I believe it will hasten the days of its triumph. It will shake people together like dice in a box, and how they will fall out nobody knows And the ideal of industrial democracy is now strong enough and clear enough to control that discontent and fashion it to a great end." While the editor believed incorrectly

11 V, 1 (September, 1914).

12 Ibid., 12-13. The original of this cartoon, according to Sloan, was carried by Debs throughout the war and fastened on the wall of his cell in Atlanta after he was imprisoned for opposing the war.

that there had been mass protest in Europe, he had no illusions as to its temporary nature. Despite autocratic suppression of disorder, he nevertheless thought that quietly among the soldiers and their wives, the future would grow. "'Workers of the world -- you have no quarrel with each other -- your quarrel is with your masters -- unite!'" he heard Europeans saying. "And it will be remembered by them all in the long run, because it is true."¹³

Young illustrated this long range hope with a cartoon on "The Triumph of Militarism." The massed armies of the world assaulted the steps of a platform upholding a throne on which sat a quavering king. Behind the throne cowered the figure of capitalism, and beside it squawked the vulture of militarism on a nest of bayonets.¹⁴

John Reed, writing anonymously because of his commitments to another magazine, contributed a shrewd analysis of the fundamental nature of the war, to reinforce the socialists' claim that the causes were economic. After tracing the growth of the monster of German militarism and its connection with German business, Reed documented the strangling pressure of England and France against the commercial expansion of Germany. "The situation in short is this," wrote Reed, "German Capitalists want more profits. English and French Capitalists want it all. This War of Commerce has gone on for years, and Germany has felt herself worsted. Every year she has suffered some new setback. The commercial 'smothering' of Germany is a fact of current history."¹⁵ The oppressive character

¹³ Ibid., 5.

¹⁴ Ibid., 21.

¹⁵ Ibid., 14

of Germany's government was clearly recognized, yet Reed's conclusion was simply that Germany was united in the war because a continuation of peace would have meant destruction to business and labor alike. On one side was the gospel of "blood and iron," and on the other, the navy of England, the army of France and the millions of semi-serfs of the Russian autocracy. Both sides illustrated the falling out of armed commercial rivals. Reed advised American socialists in his conclusion:¹⁶

We, who are Socialists, must hope -- we may even expect -- That out of this horror of bloodshed and dire destruction will come far-reaching social changes -- and a long step forward towards our goal of Peace among Men.

But we must not be duped by this editorial buncombe about Liberalism going forth to Holy War against Tyranny.

This is not Our War.

Art Young further explained the nature of the war to American labor with a fine and sensitive cartoon of a worker reading of war in the newspaper, while his wife with a baby in her arms stood nearby. Around the figures, isolated in space, hovered sheeted figures with skeleton heads and laughing jaws.¹⁷ "I hope cartoonists will go on drawing pictures of the horrors of war," Young further expanded his theme, "But war is only one evil -- and merely the result of a greater -- the struggle for profits brother fights against brother to a finish, in a world that was meant for joy."¹⁸

"Socialists are not fooled by capitalism's old trick of setting up this race or that as the enemy of civilization," the Masses replied to

16 Ibid., 15. The lack of emphasis on the horrors of German militarism was apparently in part a product of the pre-war power of the German socialist groups. Socialists believed that German autocracy was historically doomed anyway, war or no war.

17 Ibid., 3.

18 Ibid., 18.

e accusations of German barbarism. "Not Germany, or Russia, or Turkey, Japan, or China, is the enemy of civilization. The enemy of civilization is Business For Profit."¹⁹ In October, the magazine condemned all of the belligerents. William English Walling accused the German Socialist leadership of being social reformers and labor aristocrats, while Stuart Davis drew an elongated Kaiser defending himself from a shower of vegetables hurled by an unseen audience above the caption "Get the Hook." The Czar was attacked as the enemy of all liberty. Young singled out Britannia as a Valkyrie with shield, spear and crooked sword stepping out of the sea onto the continent below a table listing England's record of force, conquest, pauperized labor and naval imperialism. The caption read: "Britannia in Righteous Wrath Resolves to Crush Out German Militarism."²⁰ C. E. S. Wood's first "Heavenly Discourse" satirized the prayer to God by all of the allies. The atrocity stories were dismissed as more important to modern war than food. The best method was to have a stock on hand, then when the war began the manufacture could continue indefinitely. The most vicious attack was reserved for an American:²¹

"We must play a great part in the world, and perform those deeds of blood, of valor, which above everything else bring national renown. By war alone can we acquire those virile qualities necessary to win in the stern strife of actual life."

The reader doubtless recognizes in the above the familiar strain of thought of that semi-barbarian, William II. And the reader is right.

This particular expression, however, came from the pen of our dearly beloved Theodore Roosevelt. How he must envy the Kaiser now!

19 Ibid., 17.

20 VI, 4 (October, 1914).

21 Ibid., 17.

Young sketched the ex-President in the next issue with jack-booted legs akimbo, sword waving, "At It Again."²²

As the reports from Europe began to come in, and the magazine discovered that the socialists had not offered the expected opposition, they readjusted their acceptance of war as a fact. Reed, again anonymously, contributed "Notes on the War," in which he described the universal patriotism which he had found, the subordination of the struggle between capital and labor in all of the warring nations and the death of ideas in Europe.²³ Mabel Dodge, in "The Secret of War," reported her shocked discovery that men liked fighting. "Of course, if they can find a principle to fight for, they fight and like it still better, but what war is for the main part is the inconceivable, the inevitable love of -- fighting itself," she wrote. "There is no deeper meaning than that to be found in it, and there never has been any other."²⁴ She believed all the men of Europe happy and concluded that the only hope for permanent peace was a crusade by women because women despised war.

Eastman accepted Reed's account of universal patriotism and even the eagerness which Mabel Dodge discovered. Returning to psychological analysis, he found an explanation which seemed to cover the new set of facts which the war had forced upon his pragmatic mind. "We must surrender the plan of stamping out differences in custom, language, dress, temperament, if we are not to affront and arouse the tribal fear which turns sane men into wild beasts, fighting for something which is obviously

22 VI, 16 (November, 1914).

23 Ibid., 14.

24 Ibid., 8.

dearer to them than their own lives If we affront that tribal sense, we affront something in men which rises in them, submerging every rational impulse, and cries out for blood."²⁵ Basing his thought on an instinctivist rather than an economic interpretation of man, the editor selected what seemed to him the only valid hypothesis which would describe the new data.

Emphasizing the post-war changes, and in this way also accepting the war as fact, Arthur Bullard recommended that American socialists refuse to be discouraged by the action of their European brothers and proceed to organize the new International to unite the socialists again after the war. Stressing the hope for an uprising in Europe either during or after the war, Bullard proposed that with money, with arms and with men, Americans prepare to help European revolution.²⁶

The Masses was one of the first to recognize the essential need of a positive policy for the United States which was adapted to the reality of war, yet would project forward toward permanent peace. Long before Wilson proposed the League of Nations, the magazine printed an article advocating an international organization other than the Socialist International. The author of the plan was none other than Roger Babson, the adviser to American finance.²⁷ In "Peace as a Matter of Business,"

25 Ibid., 14.

26 Ibid., 5-6. The American socialists were by no means completely at a loss in the face of the apparent treachery of the European socialist groups. Under the leadership of such men as Bullard, they immediately began a drive for the reconstitution of the international. The Europeans themselves struggled for the same goal, and the left wing succeeded under the domination of Lenin.

27 VI, 11 (December, 1914). Babson traced the origin of his plan to a speech proposing the neutralizing of China delivered by John Hays Hammond at the Third American Peace Conference. What Babson proposed

Babson proposed that business men had no faith in international courts or boards of arbitration for the same reasons that labor distrusted the home variety, because the sole aim of such organizations was to maintain the status quo. Tracing the history of the formation of the American government, he pointed out that it was the addition of an executive and legislative branch which had provided the safety valve allowing for the peaceful maintenance of the union. Despite the inevitability of an international government, it was then unfortunately far removed. As a beginning, Babson urged the establishment of an international commission to control the seas and trade barriers. Each nation was to have a vote proportionate to her strength. Without some such organization, the author believed that business would continue to suffer seriously from militarism and war. An example of the propaganda slips being sent out by business men in their letters spoke of world government, and concluded with a warning:²⁸

Until such plans are developed and the United States is a part thereof, we should continue to increase our armaments, and seriously prepare for war. Unless we are willing to join other nations in yielding some of our sovereignty rights for the good which would come to us from such a federation, then we should be prepared to fight. Whether or not such a world federation would be to our immediate advantage may be a debatable question; but all should realize that there is no half way step for most of the customary peace talk is utterly unsound.

To many businessmen, as well as to the Masses, militarism was far less desirable than any intelligent plan to produce peace.

27 (continued) was not, of course, the League of Nations, but the first steps toward a tri-partite federal government for the selfish interests of men engaged in business and industry. As Charles Beard explained the United States' Constitution, Babson represented a federalism similar to that of the founding fathers.

28 Ibid., 11.

Eastman quickly evaluated this plan of Babson's in pragmatic terms as a highly possible and desirable solution to the impasse in which nations found themselves when war seemed inevitable. The idea of world peace enlisted the hard, cold interests of most groups in modern society, including capital, labor and the organized power of women. "Such a federation (with power) would not immediately insure peace," wrote the editor, "but it would approximate a state of international security of life and commerce such as we have among the states It would place before the imagination of men an affirmative ideal to supplant the honorific insanity of patriotism."²⁹

This form of internationalism would not interfere with socialism. Eastman anticipated the dogmatic anti-bourgeois arguments of his fellow-revolutionists. "Let us admit that we are here dealing with a hope that is not social-revolutionary in any sense," he said. "It is really only a supremely sagacious step to be taken by a bourgeois society, completely cleared and cured of the remnants of feudalism." With the Masses, as usual, on the side of realism against dogma, the editor admitted the lack of socialist logic, yet pleaded "let us not block the progress of our hopes, out of respect to a major premise."³⁰ Faced with the realities of war and the possible destruction of socialist hopes by militarism and suppression, the magazine found a positive answer within three months of the declaration. If war would defeat all chance of progress towards liberty, then Roger Babson and the whole of American bourgeois society were to be welcomed in an alliance to do something about war.

29 Ibid., 15.

30 Loc. cit. The cold realism of this position was easily matched by almost all of the nations at war.

Two months later, the magazine challenged Woodrow Wilson to accept his responsibility as a thinking man. "In brief," wrote Eastman, "it is the hour and the day for President Wilson to take the first step towards international federation. He has it in his hands to make his administration a momentous event in planetary history -- a thing not for historians, indeed, but for biologists, to tell of, because the elimination of war will profoundly alter the character of evolution Is he capable of a man's prayer, a great act of resolution?"³¹ As it turned out, he was, but not for many long months.

The Masses did not follow up the subject in detail until the last month of 1915, in a brilliant essay by Eastman entitled "The Only Way to End War."³² Dismissing the fundamental ideas of hopeful reformers and socialists alike, he claimed that the desire to eliminate war by changing either the attitudes or ideas of men was hopelessly utopian and unscientific. The conduct of international socialists and Christian pacifist businessmen alike, during the war, showed that under stress man would inevitably follow his deep instinctive nature as it was manifested in the instincts of pugnacity and gregariousness. "And most scientists, I believe," said the editor, "would agree that a basic disposition to identify self with a social group, and to be pugnacious in the gregarious way that nations are, is one of the unchanging attitudes of man. Culture can, and doubtless has, inflamed and overdeveloped it. A different culture

31 VI, 14 (February, 1915).

32 VIII, 9-10 (December, 1915). This essay was combined with others in a penetrating but unpopular book by Eastman entitled Understanding Germany (New York, 1916). The book was banned in 1917 by the Committee on Public Information.

can mitigate its strength. But it is there, no matter what you teach."³³ Since learned characteristics could not be inherited, the problem was insuperable without the most profound and far-reaching social change to control the environment of youth as nationalism did at the time.

Eastman returned to internationalism for his solution to the problem of war. "For there is one method of handling original instincts, more practical than selective breeding, and more sure and permanent than cultural suppression," offered Eastman. "That is to alter the environment in such fashion as to offer new objects for these instincts to adhere to, and similar but less disastrous functions for them to perform."³⁴ The analysis was very close to that of William James in "The Moral Equivalent of War," but Eastman carried his proposals a step farther as a result of the war experience. He recommended that the United States immediately set up a hemispheric federation which would begin to absorb the loyalties of all "Americans." The first step toward world peace had to be taken at home rather than by mixing into the European war. Offering a larger identification to the instinctive nature of man was the only possible answer to the problem of war. Only such a plan was non-Utopian, because it alone of all anti-war proposals was not contradicted by science. "Ultimately our patriotism may embrace the Earth, the Earth be our nation, and we go out to fight the enemies of what we deem a terrestrial well-being. There is nothing Utopian in that," Eastman concluded. "But to hope that patriotism can be cut out of the nervous organization of the true-bred man of the west, or that war, which is both the parent and the

33 Ibid., 9.

34 Ibid., 10.

child of patriotism, can be made so horrible to him whose ancestral food was war -- that is Utopian."³⁵ In war as in domestic affairs, the Masses believed in revolution through knowledge. Dogma had to give way to experience regardless of the effect such modification might have on the purity of theoretical doctrine. For this reason, as chronicled in Chapter II, Eastman gave support to Wilson against Hughes even while he voted for Allen Benson in 1916.

Later on, Eastman made the application of his plan to international socialism more specific. Accepting the opposition of dogmatic socialists who condemned the European organizations for violating their class and economic interest, Eastman said: "It is not very scientific to denounce a fact for refusing to come under your hypothesis. It is wiser to scrutinize the fact with a view to remodelling, if necessary, the hypothesis." The hypothesis in need of change was that people went to war to defend their property. Pointing to the universal destruction of modern war, Eastman claimed that "the motive to patriotic fighting is not a mere derivative from business interest; it is a native impulse of our constitutions [sic]."³⁶ Without repeating the psychological analysis, the editor pointed out that only those with deficient pugnacious instincts (the pacifists) and the intellectual heroes (who fought war as did Liebknecht in Germany) could resist the patriotic stampede. The masses could never be educated to do so once the crisis of war, and especially invasion -- real or anticipated, was upon them.

Eastman drew practical conclusions for American socialists. They

35 Ibid., 10.

36 VIII, 27 (August, 1916).

should fight militarism as long as they could, knowing that the struggle would fail in case of actual war; they should join any bourgeois efforts to establish world organizations so that the reaction of war would not destroy them; and they should rebuild the International in the specific hope of staving off war or taking advantage of revolution which might follow war. "United anti-militarism and Federation of the Bourgeois States should be the rally-cry of the new international," concluded the editor.³⁷ Eastman still progressed toward liberty through revolution based on the class struggle, but he recognized national wars as the greatest enemy of liberty on earth, both in themselves and in their bitter results, and he modified economic determinism to fit the facts as he saw them. This was the general position of the Masses at the time of the United States' declaration of war.

There was little the magazine could do toward reconstituting the international aside from advocating new life and a fixed anti-war purpose. They reported the activities of anti-war socialists such as Karl Liebknecht in Germany and others of his kind in every warring nation. William English Walling summed up the first and second Zimmerwald Conferences with marked approval for the second as a step toward a new adjustment to war and revolution on the part of world socialism.³⁸ However, the major task of the Masses was to fight American militarism, false

37 Ibid., 29.

38 These conferences, held at the little village of Zimmerwald, Switzerland during 1916, were an attempt to rebuild or keep alive the international. The first represented the pre-war groups and achieved very little. The second, sometimes known as the second-and-a-half international, was dominated quietly by Lenin and proved to lead toward the peace terms offered by Russia after the revolution. Lenin's influence was so little apparent that Walling did not mention him.

patriotism and the alliance of business with the military.

As soon as the war began, the magazine struck at Theodore Roosevelt as the most blatant of American militarists. In an article by Amos Pinchot entitled "American Militarism," Roosevelt was compared to the German race-war theorist, von Bernhardi.³⁹ Pinchot linked Roosevelt's idea of the "softness" and "degeneracy" of modern man solely with a small capitalist group. Certainly American labor conditions did not lead to softness for the working man. Pinchot pointed out that those in America who were advocating militarism were in reality engaged in the major struggle between capitalist world imperialism and international labor, at present only partially subordinate to a war between rival groups of capitalists. War was an economic problem, said Pinchot, and militarism could and should be fought within the United States by labor and its allies. Dell added that socialists were not pacifists, that they believed that peace was not a dream, but an attainable reality to be got by victory in the war of the classes, rather than by supporting national and capitalist wars. The line was clear. Reason and socialism were to oppose hysterical falsehood and capitalism according to the Masses.

Reed sent in an eye-witness report of militarism in Europe in "The Worst Thing in Europe."⁴⁰ After describing with some exaggeration the behaviour of officers and soldiers in the German, French, Austrian, Russian and English armies, he attacked the brutal domination of the officer's caste. "They will tell you that a conscript army is Democratic," he said to Americans, "because everybody has to serve; but they won't

³⁹ VI, 8-9 (January, 1915).

⁴⁰ VI, 17-18 (March, 1915).

tell you that military service plants in your blood the germ of blind obedience, of blind irresponsibility, that it produces one class of Commanders in your state and your industries and accustoms you to do what they tell you even in time of peace." Describing the proposal to raise a great army of defense, Reed concluded: "and the logical end of all this is Germany; and the logical end of Germany is, and always will be, War."⁴¹

In May, Rosika Schwimmer, who was to influence Henry Ford to sponsor the Peace Ship, wrote from Buda-Pesth to describe the human horrors of the war, especially in the widespread effect on the civilian population. In contrast, the sinking of the Lusitania was acknowledged only in a brief note as an illumination of the nature of modern war. "The murder of unarmed neutral passengers arouses us because it is new," said the Masses. "But in our abhorrence of the act, we need not vainly imagine that there is only one nation capable of it. And if we do not wish to become as familiar with this new atrocity as we are with the old ones, we will put an end of war."⁴² The Lusitania represented a shadow of the real horrors resulting from actual participation in the war.

The resignation of Bryan aroused the magazine to the recognition of how close the United States was to war. Such a reality was the only possible meaning to be derived from Bryan's act. Stressing the social reaction which would follow participation in war, Eastman recommended both arbitration and the recognition that the problem of the submarine would cause a shift in international law, since war and humaneness had

⁴¹ Ibid., 18. Reed was no scientific thinker. Freedom from straight emotionalism was his problem whether in literature or journalism. As John Hicks told, however, Reed did mature.

⁴² VI, 15 (June, 1915).

nothing to do with each other. "With the indignation of those who find an especial iniquity in the violations of the 'rules of civilized warfare,' Socialists cannot fully sympathize," the editor wrote bitterly. "The calling out of peaceful populations to kill and be killed for no reason, is an atrocity beside which any of the minor incidents of war are trivial If Germany seems to us a more conspicuous example of this than the other nations, we only wish for its government the punishment we wish for theirs -- bankruptcy, disillusion, and revolt."⁴³ Conacher drew a fine picture of a dead soldier, lying in desolation and rain above the words: "The attack was of no particular importance and was made simply to 'feel out' the strength of the enemy."⁴⁴ M. A. Kempf made a powerful attempt to enforce the horror of war with a drawing of a skeleton figure of death on a malevolent-eyed horse against a great swirl of figures, birds, smoke and fire: "To the U. S.: 'Did you call?'"⁴⁵

The crisis passed, and Eastman went to France to try to understand a little more intimately the actual nature of the war in Europe. In Paris, he persuaded Arthur Bullard to write a long and brilliant auto-interview on "The State of the War."⁴⁶ Bullard was fully opposed to Germany because of its insistence upon exporting a philosophy of life marked by complete freedom of the soul (as in Kant) and equally complete discipline of the body (as in Bismarck). This sharp division between soul and body, Bullard conceived to be religious in the worst sense, mystical and crusading. He believed, and documented very well in the light of later

⁴³ VI, 6 (July, 1915).

⁴⁴ Ibid., 7.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 14-15.

⁴⁶ VI, 5-8 (August, 1915).

developments, that Germany could not win without the interference of chance. He also observed that the war was doing no one thing to Europeans except intensifying what they were before the experience. The most dramatic achievement of the war, as Bullard saw it, was the deliberately engineered tension directed toward a common effort. "If we could learn the trick by which the governing class of Europe has turned this rather pallid instinct of loving the old farm into this glaring, consuming flame of Patriotism," he wrote to the socialists, "we could pull off our Revolution in short order."⁴⁷ Bullard agreed that the first thing was to defeat Germany, but his keenest wish was to live into the post-war period to see what became of the discovery that history could be managed. He anticipated either a continued tension and the real possibility of social change or complete lassitude and escape.

Eastman, viewing France for himself, came to the conclusion that it was "The Uninteresting War."⁴⁸ The love of fighting was gone, he observed, and only the killing industry, the machine of modern war remained. As a symbol he compared the killing of a bull at home on the farm with the mass production of the stockyards. Aside from the submarine and the airplane, there was no individual glamour left in war, only the hope, which Eastman found in the horrors of the hospitals, that survival, even in pieces, could result from the trenches.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 8. Bullard anticipated the engineering of revolution by Lenin, so aptly learned by Mussolini and Hitler.

⁴⁸ VI, 5-8 (September, 1915). The article was accompanied by a Young cartoon of the ape god of war holding a stone tablet of the laws of Christian warfare ending "so saith the law and the profits." Young was notable among other artists and poets who did not forget to belabor the capitalist enemy in every blow at the war.

A deeper reason for the lack of interest in the war, Eastman found, was that it had no real aim, no liberty to be gained, not even democracy to be won except as a kind of inevitable by-product of history which could scarcely excite soldiers concerned with survival. The war was one of nationalism, and after the patriotic impulse had passed, it was an uninteresting business. "The only way for an internationalist to become deeply interested in such a war is to lay aside his judgment altogether and entertain wild and fearful prophecies, and see one side or the other as the center and soul of all things divine and sure," wrote Eastman, "and the other as barbarity unveiled."⁴⁹ He believed France and England could and should win; they were vastly superior in democracy and freedom to Germany; their militarism was by no means the important cause of war that Germany's was. But given the worst about Germany's behaviour, the war remained of little interest because it was meaningless and worthless in its object. "There's more for me in Mexico or Bayonne," concluded the editor, "or any of these barbarous places where the people fight in battles, and for something I can want."⁵⁰ The truest barrier against American participation in the war was the meanness and inhuman barbarity of both the real war and its commercial causes.

In the same issue, a letter from L. C. P. accused the magazine of clouding the issue, which was simply that if Germany did not abide by international law and human decency on the sea, the United States would fight. Eastman responded to the vigorous statement of the fighting attitude with an equally straightforward explanation of the nature of

⁴⁹ Ibid., 7.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 8.

international law. Not only did such law always lag behind the facts of warfare, but war could not vindicate legal rights even by victory. "If submarines can be made swift enough and manageable enough to stop ocean liners and do the 'visit and search,' then they will soon conform to international law," wrote Eastman. "If they can't, international law will conform to them."⁵¹ Citing bombing attacks from the air and poison-gas and flaming oil as sanctioned in use by all the belligerents, the editor resolved that the knowledge of the nature of war and international law should not leave him regardless of how excited he became. As his own shrewd psychological analysis showed, only pacifists and intellectual heroes would be able to cling to a rational position as the threat of war came closer, but so long as there was any time, the magazine would continue to struggle for reason and against the blind fighting spirit.

As American military preparedness became more and more a national issue, the Masses strengthened its attack. A cartoon such as Becker's sketch of two older men in ill-fitting uniforms at the Plattsburg Civilian Training Camp was directed primarily against the uses of militarism by capitalists. One temporary soldier said to the other: "This doesn't mean that we're really going to fight?" "Oh, no," was the response, "This is just to set an example to our employees."⁵² Uncle Sam, a fat, striding figure armed to the teeth with all kinds of weapons including bombs and poison gas, was pictured by Young as "Looking for Peace."⁵³ In opposition to the powerful leagues for preparedness, the Masses helped to

51 Ibid., 15.

52 VII, 13 (October-November, 1915).

53 VIII, 22 (December, 1915).

foster an Anti-Enlistment League and printed a brief pledge "against enlistment as a volunteer for any military or naval service in international war, offensive or defensive, and against giving my approval to such enlistment on the part of another."⁵⁴ This propaganda was part of an attempt to counteract such films as "The Battle Cry of Peace," sponsored by the National Security League, the Army League and the American Legion.⁵⁵ The balanced and reasonable wording of the instructions for the pledge which said "we ask the support of no persons who have not carefully weighed the arguments concerning war both offensive and defensive," was in marked contrast to the emotionalism of the film, which featured an invading army, smashed furniture and ravished women.

However moderate, the pledge called forth a denunciation of Eastman and the magazine from the New York Globe. The newspaper heatedly claimed that Eastman would have been a pacifist traitor to Leonidas in the Graeco-Persian Wars. Eastman restated his position after pointing out that Leonidas lived a long time ago, and that a higher ideal, that of a free humanity, had supplanted national patriotism. "And while it might conceivably happen, that this ideal should demand our enlisting in a national army -- to fight either against our own country or with it -- it is in the highest degree improbable," ventured the editor. "It is so improbable that people of the pledge-signing disposition may very well be encouraged to express in that way their absolute renunciation of the

⁵⁴ VIII, 19 (December, 1915).

⁵⁵ The American Legion, Incorporated is not to be confused with the post-war organization. It was one of many pressure groups for preparedness before World War I had reached the United States. The chief sponsors were Theodore Roosevelt and General Leonard Wood.

patriotic ideal, and its military retinue, as essentially barbaric, inane, and homicidal."⁵⁶ The signers, said Eastman firmly, would doubtless be the first to bleed in the cause of industrial liberty.

To reinforce his point, the editor printed a symposium the next month under the title "Do You Believe in Patriotism?" Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, Elsie Clews Parsons, Will Irwin, Inez Haynes Gillmore, Sara Bard Field, Ernest Untermann, John Haynes Holmes, Stuart Davis, C. E. S. Wood, John Sloan, Charles E. Russell and L. O'Dell answered the question. The answers ranged from Flynn's, which rejected attachment to anything but class; to Russell's which rejected foolish patriotism but welcomed the defense of ideals, aspirations and history against reaction and absolutism as represented in Germany. Most of the writers clearly differentiated a genuine love of country to be used for the building of an ever-better land from blind intolerance and the selfish use of passion to protect the status quo in the industrial system and the world network of trade. As John Sloan said: "Yes, I believe in Patriotism, but I have none of it; I don't like the present day variety, nor that of the past, but I have great faith in that of the future -- till then, yours, John Sloan."⁵⁷ On the same page a poem, "Prepared," by Martha Gruening castigated the self-interested motives of the official patriots who would use militarism ruthlessly to protect a carefully cherished system of injustice, brutality and prejudice from any attack. "Why shouldn't I shed my blood as well as the blood of my neighbor/ To guard these inherited rights against any

⁵⁶ Ibid., 19.

⁵⁷ VIII, 13 (March, 1916).

alien invaders?"⁵⁸

Eastman, in an editorial in the same issue, hammered hard at the idea that militarism wherever it appeared was exactly the same. That German ideas and methods were fundamental to American militarists was illustrated by a lengthy quotation from Major General John F. O'Ryan, commander of the New York State Militia, on the need for military discipline in the United States and the subordination of the "forty-eight little armies" of the militia to one-man control. Since the method of the militarists was to stimulate hatred of Germany, Eastman countered:⁵⁹

Do not let them make you hate Germany.

Hate militarism.

And hate it hardest where you have the best chance to do something against it. Hate it here. .

America first!

This attempt to put the phrase "America First," of which the preparedness advocates were especially fond, in another setting was rejected by Charles W. Wood in his belated answer to the symposium on patriotism. Wood proposed that the evasion involved in proving that ultimately the socialists were the real patriots be abandoned in a frank acceptance of materialism and rejection of any vague idealism. "We are opposed to nationalism because it is little and narrow, because it limits the joy of life, keeps us out of a hundred worlds worth knowing and makes us slaves. And because it breeds war. Not a vague or idealistic reason in the

58 Ibid., 13.

59 VIII, 16 (March, 1916). Eastman's use of the phrase "America First" is interestingly parallel to its later meaning before World War II.

bunch, but they are enough for me," wrote Wood. So specifically personal was his patriotism, that he concluded: "Let honor and such truck go to the devil: we'd rather have lungs and livers and whole faces and whole families and a whole material existence." He saw that very soon the critics would be silenced, so he proposed to state a permanent position while there was yet time. "In case of war between the American government and some other, I intend to remain perfectly neutral; at least, until I am convinced by reason, not geography, that one side is entitled to my support." This same neutrality he proposed to the workers of America, who had thus far failed to be aroused by the war propaganda.⁶⁰

In May of 1916, the Masses reprinted the speech of James H. Maurer, socialist president of the Pennsylvania State Federation of Labor, to the Senate Committee on Military Affairs. Maurer made clear, that, as far as he could speak for the group, labor was definitely opposed to preparedness. The idea of invasion from Europe was absurd, and only the collection of the enormous war loans to Europe could require an army. Rather than anticipating active participation to save the war credits, Maurer believed military preparations were directed to the day of peace when Europe would repudiate the war debts. The laboring man, said Maurer, refused to be a party to the war. He was tired of being conscripted in the interest of the rich man's fortune and taxed, to boot, to pay the expense of his own conscription.

Eastman took Maurer's place as representing labor in a visit to the White House from the leaders of the American Union Against Militarism. Because labor was not represented in the public voice of the United States, he told President Wilson, the expressions of militaristic sentiment which

⁶⁰ VIII, 8 (June, 1916).

the President heard spoke only for the masters, not for the people. What would make sense to them would be the settling of international disputes, whether with Mexico or with Germany, by arbitration as in the A. B. C. conference. By such means, said Eastman, "we believe the danger of foisting the European evil, militarism, upon this country can be averted, even in a crisis."⁶¹

An accompanying article entitled "The Masses at the White House" described how skilfully the delegation was handled by Wilson, who was "the ablest man that has been in that office for years." Despite the clearly apparent fact that Wilson represented only the middle classes and the preservation of peace in the interest of world capitalism, his superior understanding of the problem was revealed in the advocacy of an international federation rather than the narrow nationalism of Theodore Roosevelt. "Preparedness is no issue," said Eastman. "They are all for that in the ruling class. But whether those who control our society shall see the practical wisdom of international action and understanding, or whether they shall commit us to that insane and bigoted nationalism which has ravaged Europe, is a vital question for us all."

All Eastman wanted was to delay and combat militarism as much as possible while Wilson moved toward the open support of an international federation. "I wish that President Wilson might point the way to all as boldly as he did to our committee," wrote the editor, "for there is no issue so great as that in upper class politics today."⁶² The campaign of

⁶¹ VIII, 16 (July, 1916). This issue was especially labelled a "Preparedness Number," and was filled with anti-militarist contributions.

⁶² Ibid., 16.

1916 mirrored Eastman's hopes insofar as remaining out of war became the issue. The consideration of the League of Nations was obviously rapidly developing in Wilson's mind, and there seemed to be a chance for American leadership without the destructiveness of actual war.

Throughout 1916, the cartoonists stressed the capitalist responsibility for preparedness and its effect on labor and youth. Becker, in January, drew Wilson surrounded by cannon and faced by four massive figures with levelled pistols. Wilson said: "But I won't want them -- there isn't any enemy to fight." Morgan, Schwab & Co. replied: "You buy these guns and we'll get you an enemy." In the same month, Young contributed a smug capitalist behind the grinning devil's mask of war collecting tribute from a trembling workingman and his family. In Becker's February cartoon, a group of workingmen interviewing the boss about Wilson's request for enlistments were told: "Sure, you'll be working for me as much there as here." Chamberlain, in a powerful cartoon of a skeleton and Mars dancing off a precipice, featured the U. S. playing the fiddle while a column of boy scouts followed the dancing figures "Learning the Steps." A fine complicated drawing by Young in the March issue was entitled "If you Belong Here -- Line Up!" It showed the uniformed ape of militarism sitting on a throne exposing a bare and hairy toe while an elaborate flunkey brought distinguished men and women representing the Army and Navy League, the Strike Breakers Security League, the Sodality of Sycophantic Simps, the Ladies Auxiliary of Military Adulation, the Benevolent Order of Munitions Manufacturers, the Brotherhood of Bloodthirsty Preachers and many others to kiss the toe and turn away delicately wiping their lips. Becker's "Patriotism," in April, showed three figures, a clergyman, a capitalist and a lean and lank John D. Rockefeller

wrapped in a flag striding across heaps of skulls and broken bodies. With many others, these drawings kept up a steady offense against the alliance of big business and the army.

The most impressive attack the Masses made on capitalist militarism was the key article in the "Preparedness" issue. The story, long and apparently carefully documented, was written by John Reed and dramatically titled "At the Throat of the Republic."⁶³ In anticipation of the exposure of the "Merchants of Death" in the work of the Nye Committee in 1934, Reed surveyed the inter-connection of preparedness organizations, munitions makers and international financiers, concluding with an examination of the labor relations of the major corporations involved. After revealing by evidence quoted from Josephus Daniels, Franklin D. Roosevelt and various statements before Congressional Committees that the United States was prepared for purely defensive purposes, Reed went on to show the connections among the founders of propaganda organizations such as the National Security League and the Navy League, the specific men controlling the manufacture of munitions and the Morgan and Rockefeller financial groups which controlled the foreign investment of the United

63 VIII, 7 et. seq. (July, 1916). Although the general charge was common among socialist critics that business was behind the war, this article was an unusually full and specific study. Historian Frederick L. Paxson in American Democracy and the World War (New York, 1936), I, 420, after showing that the belief in a money-maker's war was in part a development from the progressive movement as well as from socialism said: "But the record of 1917 gives little ground for any belief except that, at the moment, the people of the United States were ready for a war to end all wars." This generalization is, perhaps, too sweeping. Historians are, of course, very suspicious of radical sources because of their obvious bias. Nonetheless, Reed's article raises some curious questions of fact which influenced a rather large segment of American public opinion.

States through such pools as the American International Corporation set up by the National City Bank. The interlocking directorates of propaganda, munitions and financial organizations were made up of the same men, as Reed listed them with their affiliations.

The American surplus wealth, he said, which was to be invested abroad and defended by American militarism, was diverted from American labor in such a way as to leave the workers in a steel town such as Youngstown, Ohio behind the minimum subsistence wage even after war-time increases. Reed claimed that the "patriots," as they dominated their labor force, were merciless despots encouraging conditions so bad that it was more dangerous for a child to live a year in a company town than for a man to spend a year in the trenches. These men advocated war in the name of the "higher things" in life, claiming, as did Theodore Roosevelt, that material comfort was softening American democracy. Whose material comfort, asked Reed? He described the workingman's enemy as "that 2% of the people of the United States who own 60% of the national wealth, that band of unscrupulous 'patriots' who have already robbed him of all he has, and are now planning to make a soldier out of him to defend their loot." Reed had his own preparedness program to advocate. "We advocate that the workingman prepare himself against that enemy," he concluded. "This is our preparedness."⁶⁴

The article was brilliant and effective, but the Masses reached a very small audience, and America, whether moved by Wilson's righteousness

⁶⁴ Ibid., 24. The hysterical tone of the self-appointed patriots was seen at its worst in Theodore Roosevelt's Fear God and Take Your Own Part (New York, 1916), a book compiled from speeches and articles published in Metropolitan Magazine.

or seduced by war propaganda or simply moving through natural impulses, was in no mood to heed the voice of radical socialists by mid-1916, even if Benson did poll a sizable half-million votes for President. Whatever its real source of inspiration, the massive propaganda organization of the press, giving straight news or featuring Roosevelt and Leonard Wood, had the ear of the public and drummed incessantly for preparations for defense. The result of events and this propaganda was really not any longer in doubt, but the Masses continued to fight. Its last resort to delay militarism was the advocacy of a national referendum on war and preparedness. In June, it begged, "will any national legislator propose a general plebiscite to find out if we really want to go?"⁶⁵ Although LaFollette later sponsored a similar idea, by then it was too late. Ideas could no longer delay the seemingly inevitable drift toward war. Robert Minor might well have suggested civilian as well as military attitudes when he sketched his Army Medical Examiner looking up at a great hulk of a man without a head. The examiner exclaimed in rapture: "At last a perfect soldier!"⁶⁶

On the eve of the declaration, the Masses took its position in relation to the nation. Tracing the failure of neutrality to the actual partisanship of America for the allies, the Masses concluded that the

65 VIII, 17 (June, 1916).

66 VIII, 36 (July, 1916). A final effort to use reason appeared in March, 1917 in an article by Amos Pinchot called "The Courage of the Cripple." Pinchot compared William II, Roosevelt, and Nietzsche as men who overcompensated for physical weakness. Germany as a nation was distorted. Military defeat, Pinchot's pro-ally sentiments notwithstanding, would not cure, but only intensify a disease which had shaped the German nation. This appeal against the suppression of violence closed by advocating a reasoned penetration to the causes of the overcompensation. Needless to say, the article was unheeded, although it showed remarkable insight.

United States had failed to make its contribution to internationalism and that all liberties would soon be stifled. "And therefore those who are entirely loyal to the hope of liberty, and to the rights of human life as they may some day be truly conceived, will refuse to be carried into war and the warlike passion of nationalism," the magazine advised. "They will be neutral, whether the government goes to war or not. They will not enlist in the army of the government, and they will not renounce their independence of judgment, and their deliberate devotion to a better thing than any government, at the demand of those emotionalists who think it is virtuous and worthy of human dignity to abandon all judgment and all deliberate devotion whatever, in the long orgy of tribal patriotism."⁶⁷ Only a part of the Masses' staff was pacifist or intellectually heroic. This part, including the major editors, chose to defy what they believed to be irrational.

At the same time, the idea of an international organization was still recognized as potentially powerful. Giving full credit to Wilson, the Masses called his speech to the Senate in January, 1917 "The most momentous event conceivable in the evolution of a capitalistic civilization" because Wilson actually initiated a fulfillment of the prophecy of countless others. To the magazine, the idea seemed to offer the only hope of saving the social revolution from military barbarism. Yet by August, Dell began to doubt the desire of the administration to make a

67 IX, 8 (April, 1917). Reed, in his forthright, challenging way, rejected participation in the war even more boldly in an article on "Whose War?" Stressing the capitalist nature of the war and the lack of any real neutrality by the United States, he concluded: "The President didn't ask us; he won't ask us if we want war or not. The fault is not ours. It is not our war." The final sentence was the same as the last words of his article in September, 1914.

rational peace. Seeing in conscription and the censorship the iron control typical of militarist states, he felt that the inadequate response of Wilson to the proposals of the first Russian revolutionary group for peace without annexations or indemnities were almost tantamount to a rejection of reasonable war aims. Caution and suspicion could lead to years of militarism. "Peace negotiations are inevitable;" Dell concluded, "it is almost equally inevitable that they will be initiated by America. The only question is, when?"⁶⁸

The Masses fully supported the People's Council for Peace and Democracy, whose treasurer was David Starr Jordan. The aims of this organization supported the Russian Council of Workmen's and Soldiers' Delegates in their plea for peace and an attempt to safeguard American liberties and labor standards at home from militarism. After the nation was actually at war, the Masses slowly shifted its positive idealism to Russia. Repressive acts by the government, approved by the President, made the editors increasingly skeptical of the reality of Wilson's noble aims. When the Russians proposed much the same solution to war and seemed to mean what they said, the Masses found its inspiration outside an increasingly repressive America.

The magazine was never completely dedicated to an iron-clad policy even on the war. Eastman made his only attempt to superimpose a policy by circulating a manifesto among the editors against the American entrance into the war. George Bellows, who became increasingly pro-war but never resigned from the magazine, answered definitively that the

68 IX, 28 (August, 1917). Dell retained some hope in America as a peace-maker despite the participation in the war. The hope was, however, dependent on immediate proposals for peace and a short war.

magazine had no business with a formal policy on this or any other issue, that the changing convictions of the editors as expressed in their work were the only possible "policy." The document was never published by the magazine, and the policy question was dropped.⁶⁹

The split among the Masses' editors and within the Socialist party was immediately apparent after the declaration. In May, the magazine printed a letter from Walling addressed to Eastman:⁷⁰

You and Reed take exactly the same view of the duty of Americans at this juncture as the Kaiser, Bethmann-Hollweg and Zimmerman. Of course, I desire to disconnect myself from you. Heaven knows what perverse emotion or pseudo-reasoning have brought you to support Militarism in this grave crisis!

Eastman's reply treated calmly the peculiar patriotic logic of Walling. Two reasons, said the editor, governed the magazine's reaction to the war. Germany could only be defeated as a militarist from within; external defeat would produce an inflamed nationalism and a new reactionary alliance. England and Russia needed to fail of victory also to prevent the dominance of their ruling classes over a greater part of the world. America should remain out to insure a bitter defeat for all sides. In the second place, international hope was dependent upon holding out against world-wide Prussianization which could only be prevented from spreading to the United States by staying out of war. "The place to fight the economic autocracy, the oligarchy of the future, the militarism, the Iron Heel, is the place where you are," wrote the editor. "And the

69 See Eastman, Enjoyment of Living, 557-8. The Masses' artists, for example, were much divided. Bellows contributed blazing anti-German posters to the Committee on Public Information, while Glintenkamp apparently founded the "Slacker's Hotel" in Mexico City and Becker was jailed as a conscientious objector.

70 IX, 14 (May, 1917).

way to begin the fight is to refuse to give them their war."⁷¹

Eastman's answer to Walling echoed the so-called "St. Louis Proclamation" of the Socialist party. Meeting in St. Louis the day after war was declared, an overwhelming majority accepted a report which emphasized the continuation of the class struggle during a war and declared: "We brand the declaration of war by our government as a crime against the people of the United States and against the nations of the world."⁷² The majority agreed to continue the fight for socialism, to combat militarism wherever possible and to make internationalism a continuous goal as expressed through working class solidarity the world over.

A minority report advocated the acceptance of war as a fact, complete participation in the rapid prosecution of victory, the protection of liberties and the goal of international peace. John Spargo went so far as to claim that a desire for a stalemate in the war was now treason both to socialism and to the United States. The minority, including such intellectual leaders as Walling, Robert Rives LaMonte, W. J. Ghent, John Spargo, Charles E. Russell, Allan Benson, J. G. Phelps Stokes and Upton Sinclair, repudiated the Party's position on the war and withdrew to fight on the side of their erstwhile enemies. "I used to think I was a revolutionary Socialist," wrote Eastman, "but I ask to be excused from a

71 Ibid., 15.

72 IX, 24 (June, 1917). The final vote of the membership was approximately twelve to one. The result was analyzed by both Charles E. Russell and Samuel Gompers as a subversive blow by Germans and Jews. A complete rejection of this judgment appeared in Nathan Fine, Farm and Labor Movements, 307-9 and in Morris Hillquit, Loose Leaves from a Busy Life. No final answer is possible, but the latter judgments seem more reasonable for the Socialist party as a whole, despite the foundations in America of German socialism upon which the Party had been built. The revolution had become too much naturalized for so simple an explanation to account for a complex decision.

co-operative commonwealth built by a disciplined army of conscripted and militarized male and female citizens bred for patriotic 'courage and character.'" ⁷³ The minority report was an example of "how quickly the acceptance of national war brings surrender in the war for human liberty. " With the disappearance of the Czar, John Reed pointed out, the only enemy left to fight was the international capitalism which had caused the war. "The issue is clear," he said. "With these forces there is no alliance, for peace or war. Against them and their projects is the only place for liberals." ⁷⁴

Although they believed their firm position right, the Masses' editors were still cautious about any inimitable truth. In discussing the protest resignation of Upton Sinclair from the Party, Eastman stressed the anti-dogmatic position of the magazine. Although he believed the minority representatives were completely mistaken, the editor asked for them a respectful hearing. Accepting the consequences of a relativist and instrumental intellectual premise, Eastman said: "In a world like this -- headstrong and changeful and challenging thought -- the burden of proof really lies with the man who sticks by his opinions." ⁷⁵ Eastman said that the truly liberal mind could imagine itself believing anything, and was hence capable of judging without dogma. Sinclair, whose letter was reprinted, stressed the democratizing of Germany, but outside of the immediate needs of war, shared the Masses' concern about internationalism

73 Ibid., 25. The later break of Eastman and other editors with Russian communism was here and elsewhere clearly foreshadowed.

74 Ibid., 26.

75 IX, 13 (September, 1917).

and civil liberties. Eastman replied that he did not believe Germany could be democratized by force, that it was even unlikely that she could be beaten and that the crowning unrealistic trouble with Sinclair and Walling was that they were acting as if they were directing the war instead of capitalism. "I come back," said the editor, "to the purpose of the Socialist majority, and the Syndicalists and the I. W. W., to fight the militarization of this country at the hands of our industrial feudalism, as one comes back to the dry, hard, disreputable fact, after reading a grand romance about a struggle for liberty that was honorific and stylish and popular with the press."⁷⁶

The magazine departed not an inch from its complete opposition to militarism, and the campaign which they launched against conscription was as dramatic as the earlier attack on the Rockefellers. Reed did his part in a series of articles reporting the effect of the newly-developed army on the civilian population, especially dissenters from the war. In "Patriotism in the Middle West" he reported vividly a series of repressive incidents in Kansas City. "Militarism at Play" dealt with a brutal Army squad whose function it was to break up peace meetings in the New York area, according to Reed by direction of their superior officers. "One Solid Month of Liberty" tabulated the Berkman-Goldman trial, the suppression of radical periodicals, attacks on socialist headquarters, the East

76 Ibid., 17. Sinclair's answer was printed in the final issue of November-December. To a reinforcement of his earlier arguments, he added his suspicion that the revived strength of the Socialist party after the proclamation came from pacifists and Germans. As others have pointed out, the war hysteria as it was directed against those of German ancestry, made it unlikely that any but confirmed radicals would dare associate themselves with the unpopular socialist cause. The question remains moot, but the leadership, men like Morris Hillquit, were at no time "pro-German."

St. Louis race riot, the I. W. W. deportation from Bisbee, Arizona, the Mooney trial in San Francisco and the jailing of the suffragist pickets in Washington. "It is the blackest month for free men our generation has known," Reed said.⁷⁷

The attack on conscription began as soon as the policy was considered by Congress. In April, Robert Hillyer addressed a blazing sonnet to Congress as "ignorant tyrants, reckless and uncouth." A month later, Amos Pinchot wrote on "The Commercial Policy of Conscription" to show that the slave mentality was the object of all military discipline and that the militarization of the United States was directed solely at protecting capital abroad from foreign enemies and at home from labor. M. A. Kempf drew a lurid picture of three figures struggling with a skull-headed representation of war, ankle-deep in liquid. War said: "Come on in, America, the Blood's Fine!"⁷⁸

By August, the Masses' attack was gathering power. In this issue, Glintenkamp, without comment or caption, drew a cartoon of the liberty bell hanging in shattered pieces from a dilapidated mounting. Chamberlain contributed "Faithful to the End" showing a figure of Uncle Sam bowed before the altar supporting the divine fire of patriotism, while from a black cloud the sword of war struck like a bolt of lightning with starvation, conscription and censorship. Glintenkamp's cartoon entitled "Conscription" was especially offensive to patriots. Three nude figures were shown bound to the wheel, carriage and cannon mouth of an artillery piece. The three were labelled labor, democracy and youth, while a

⁷⁷ IX, 6 (September, 1917).

⁷⁸ IX, 4 (June, 1917).

wailing woman beside a child lying on the ground represented motherhood. A Boardman Robinson cartoon showed Root and Russell slipping the noose of advice around the neck of the new Russian government, while John Bull whispered into the ear of a threatening Japan, directing him toward the Russian figure. Young showed big business gathered around a table covered with war plans. A shy figure in the doorway represented Congress and said: "Excuse me, gentlemen -- where do I come in?" One figure, without turning, waved an arm and replied: "Run along now! -- We got through with you when you declared war for us."

In addition to Reed's story, "Militarism at Play," the text included "A Question" by Eastman which described the treatment of conscientious objectors as a departure from American idealism. Dell added an introduction counselling careful reading to American "protestors against governmental tyranny," to a series of letters from English conscientious objectors. Emma Goldman and Alexander Berkman, who had been jailed for advocating resistance to the draft, were defended in a brief note and a poem. Reed wrote the headline, "Knit a Strait-Jacket for Your Soldier Boy," on a reprinted newspaper story about insanity in the army. Also included was a lengthy petition to the President and Congress for the immediate repeal of the conscription law, with arguments against conscription which emphasized the lack of unanimity of the American people and the failure to consult them before moving the war-machinery into high gear. To these things the government took exception, and the issue was barred from the mails and the second-class mailing privilege was withdrawn.

The September issue eased the pressure a little, but was still boldly anti-militarist despite new handicaps. Reed's "One Solid Month of

Liberty" was accompanied by one of Young's strongest cartoons, "Having Their Fling." Below a balcony containing the devil leading an orchestra playing big guns in an "orgie maniacle," four figures representing an editor, capitalist, politician and minister danced madly, each for his own cause of democracy, honor, world peace and Jesus. The I. W. W. deportation was attacked both in an article and a cartoon by Boardman Robinson as exactly parallel to the Kaiser's deportation of Belgian working men. A detailed letter from the wife of an English conscientious objector described his treatment and the strength of the movement in England. The back page advertisement stressed the fact that among the radical publications suppressed, "the Masses is the only one which has challenged the censorship in the courts and put the Government on the defensive . . . the Masses has proved in the last few issues that it stands the foremost critic of militarism." The statement was true.

In October, Reed and Louise Bryant sent in "News from France," in which they praised Barbusse's Le Feu and the growing anti-militarism of the French army. Glintenkamp sketched, without comment, a skeleton measuring a too-pretty nude boy for a casket in the background. Eastman continued the attack on the governmental suppression of the I. W. W. under the title "The Uses of Dictatorship." He made clear why he detested war so much: because of "the sentimentality and the decay of candor and clear thinking War is a sentimental religion -- it means universal dementia, inane fixation, sacrosanct one-sidedness, bigotry and bunk in the highest."⁷⁹ Reed challenged the United States to apply its democratic demands of Germany to the industrial system at home in "A Step Toward

⁷⁹ IX, 13 (October, 1917).

Democracy."

The second class mailing privilege was obviously gone for good, and no amount of back cover advertising could bring adequate circulation to keep the magazine going on the newsstands "of every town in the United States" -- not with the government determined upon suppression. The end was very near. The final issue of November-December, 1917, although filled with indirectly contributing things, did not attack the war directly. Even moderation came too late. With the failure of its last crusade, the Masses' career was ended. The trial of certain indicted editors for violation of the Espionage Act was all that remained in December.⁸⁰

Eastman's early description of the conditions which would characterize war proved only too accurate in the case of his magazine. If many of the editors fell into the classification of intellectual heroes (certainly they were not pacifists), they suffered the fate of similar bold spirits in Europe. Their words were not heeded; they were submerged by an outraged majority; and their cause was lost for years. Labor's temporary war-time gains were wiped out. The radicals, who devoted themselves to the rights of labor, and the liberals, who supported the rights of the people, failed. The tide retreated until another time. The war, which was looked upon as ending a kind of civilization, also temporarily ended the birth of a new understanding of modern industrial society. The Masses had stressed many of the most significant developments during the war, lines of thought which would occupy

80 The Liberator was founded in February, 1913. More cautious than the Masses, the magazine faithfully reflected the declining strength of a dispossessed pre-war dream identified with the new Russia by the disheartened Americans.

the future; yet the magazine was dead; and the internationalism for which it had fought was defeated by the forces of reaction so vividly castigated by the magazine.

CHAPTER IX

POSTSCRIPT -- ON TRIAL

Although the Masses ceased publication with the issue for November-December, 1917, with the apparent failure of most of their program, the decision of the editors to fight even the government for the suppression of ideas made the magazine a very lively ghost, especially at the two trials in April and October of 1918. As its entire career demonstrated, the Masses' editors knew and hated the power of any censorship over men and ideas. Freedom to think and to act on knowledge was the very root of their concept of revolution. As Eastman's analysis of war-time patriotism showed, the editors were well aware of the dilemma of a dissenter during a time of actual warfare. Nonetheless, they fought censorship from the time the war was declared despite their recognition of the probable consequence to their magazine.

A reprint of a Bulletin from the American Union Against Militarism warned about a censorship bill, in part because the great metropolitan press had too much power to fear a censorship administered, as proposed, by newspapermen. "But the really independent press must be made to realize the threat concealed in this bill and all lovers of democracy must be aroused to fight it even before it makes its appearance in Congress," said the Bulletin.¹ The first attempt to establish a censorship was a failure because the newspapers decided to fight it, but in the confusion of events, they allowed with little or no protest the passage of the

1 IX, 1st (April, 1917).

Espionage Act and the creation of the Committee on Public Information under the chairmanship of George Creel.² Creel had the power to act as a censor, but he did not see his job that way. "In no degree was the Committee an agency of censorship," he wrote, "a machinery of concealment or reopression In all things, from first to last, without halt or change, it was a plain publicity proposition, a vast enterprise in salesmanship, the world's greatest adventure in advertising."³ The task of enforcing the censorship was largely turned over to the postoffice department under Postmaster General Albert S. Burleson.

The Espionage Act, which served as Burleson's chief authority, was passed on June 15, 1917. The important censorship provisions were contained in Title I, Section 3:⁴

Whoever, when the United States is at war, shall willfully make or convey false reports or false statements with intent to interfere with the operation of success of the military or naval forces of the United States or to promote the success of its enemies and whoever, when the United States is at war, shall willfully cause or attempt to cause insubordination, disloyalty, mutiny, or refusal of duty, in the military or naval forces of the United States, or shall willfully obstruct the recruiting or enlistment service of the United States, to the injury of the service or of the United States shall be punished by a fine of not more than \$10,000 or imprisonment for not more than twenty years, or both.

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- 2 The Masses greeted Creel's appointment by reminding him of the article of his on Rockefeller they had printed, an article which had been censored by other publications so that he was forced to give it to the Masses: "He brought it to us. We passed it. Our readers will remember. So will George Creel, we hope." IX, 23 (June, 1917).
 - 3 George Creel, How We Advertised America (New York, 1920), 4. Two excellent books on Creel's work and the censorship are James R. Mock and Cedric Larson, Words That Won the War (Princeton, 1939) and James R. Mock, Censorship, 1917 (Princeton, 1941). For the free speech and press issue, see especially Zechariah Chafee, Jr., Freedom of Speech (New York, 1920). See also George Creel, Rebel at Large (New York, 1947).
 - 4 Reprinted in Mock, Censorship, 1917, 49-50.

Although intent had to be proved, it was obvious that any opposition to the war, to censorship, to conscription, to the war aims, could be construed as "obstructing the recruiting or enlistment service." With this weapon, the entire Socialist and left-wing press was silenced.

When Creel was appointed and thought generally to be a censor, Merrill Rogers, business manager of the Masses, took a copy of the June issue of the magazine to Washington to ask if it was all right, especially in an anti-war advertisement written by Mrs. J. Sargeant Cram. Creel told him that approval for mailing was in the hands of the postoffice department, but glanced over the magazine and said that he could see nothing which violated any law at that time, although he heartily disagreed with much of the contents.⁵ The editors then consulted Harry Weinberger, a New York lawyer, and advised readers that treason was legally not a matter of speech, but of overt acts. As to sedition, there was no such thing in law as a seditious utterance, especially if the speaker advocated a change in the law.⁶ This legal opinion apparently covered the Masses' continued campaign against conscription and war, but to be safe, Eastman also wrote to Burleson to find out how the magazine could be written so that it could express honest opinions and remain mailable. He got no definite response.

The attempts to remain both legal and honest failed. When the August issue was presented for mailing, the magazine was informed that it

5 This conversation became an issue at the trial. Rogers claimed the press misquoted him on Creel's "approval." Creel testified that he believed from the beginning the magazine was treasonable -- and said so. Both temporized until it was clear that Creel did disapprove, but until the Espionage Act could cite no law violated. See the New York Times, 13: 1 (April 25, 1918).

6 IX, 34-5 (July, 1917).

was unmailable under the Espionage Act. Solicitor General William H. Lamar of the postoffice department refused to say which things were a violation of the act or to allow any appeal, so the Masses retained Gilbert Roe as its lawyer, and went to court seeking an injunction to prevent the postmaster of New York from barring the magazine from the mails. Defending itself against the government of the United States, the little magazine still insisted on a righteous offensive.

At the hearing before Judge Learned Hand, Assistant District Attorney Earl Barnes revealed that the postoffice department objected to a Robinson cartoon, "Making the World Safe for Democracy," H. J. Glintenkamp's cartoons of the liberty bell and conscription, a poem about Emma Goldman and Alexander Berkman in prison by Josephine Bell, a paragraph in an article on conscientious objectors written by Dell, and two editorials by Eastman, "A Question" and "Friend of American Freedom." The Masses' expressed attitude toward the conscription law and the treatment of conscientious objectors was interpreted as effectively interfering with the successful conduct of the war by obstructing recruiting. In response, the magazine editors affirmed constitutional rights of free speech and free press. Especially, they condemned the indirect suppression through the postoffice, and Roe claimed at the hearing that unless the magazine was indictable, it was not unmailable. This was the same argument the Masses had used in fighting the exclusion from newsstands by Ward and Gow.

In a memorable decision, Judge Hand granted a preliminary injunction fully supporting the magazine's claims. Establishing intent as the crux of legal interpretation, the Judge said that the magazine did not violate the specific law if it intended rather to oppose the law itself

and have it changed. Possible effects which might violate the law were not relevant as applied to the particular things singled out by the government "without a violation of their meaning quite beyond any tolerance of understanding." Americans had a constitutional right to oppose their government at any time, providing they did not deliberately intend to violate the provisions of a specific law. The injunction was ready for signature in New York on July 25th.

On that same date, Judge C. M. Hough in Windsor, Vermont ordered a stay of execution of Judge Hand's preliminary injunction on an appeal by Postmaster Patten of New York. The procedure by which one judge countermanded another, although legal, was, as Judge Hough said, unknown in his experience. Hough said, however, that the postoffice was not a common carrier, but a high governmental duty not bound to carry revolution. The stay of execution remained in force despite the protests of the magazine.

The September issue was held up at the postoffice. The New York Times later said that the thirteen copies submitted were detained for lack of postage.⁸ The real weapon was disclosed when the magazine received a demand from the postoffice department that it show cause why its second-class mailing privilege should not be revoked. Inquiry revealed that "The reason advanced was that we were irregular in publication and therefore not entitled to the privileges The August issue had not gone through the mails," Merrill Rogers wrote in summary. "Therefore, by reason of such irregularity THE MASSES had ceased to be a 'newspaper or

7 This hearing was one of the major landmarks in the controversial legal history of free speech and press. See Chafee, Freedom of Speech.

8 10:3 (November 3, 1917).

periodical within the meaning of the law."⁹ The fact that the post-office department had caused the irregularity itself by a procedure which was still to be tested in the courts made no difference. The privilege was revoked. This brutally effective device left only newsstand sales and expressed bundles to keep the magazine alive. It was suppression by strangulation.

Eastman wrote a long letter to President Wilson praising his letter to the Pope, which had in effect accepted the Russian peace terms as similar to those of the United States. This change in policy, which the Masses had advocated, made the destruction of the magazine even less warrantable, said Eastman.¹⁰ The President replied in part: "I think that a time of war must be regarded as wholly exceptional and that it is legitimate to regard things which would in ordinary circumstances be innocent as very dangerous to the public welfare, but the line is manifestly exceedingly hard to draw . . . and that we are trying, it may be clumsily but genuinely, to draw it without fear or favor or prejudice."¹¹ There was little promise for the magazine in the concluding generalization.

Amos Pinchot, Eastman and Reed wrote another letter to the

9 IX, 3 (October, 1917).

10 Eastman's letter and Wilson's answer were printed in the Masses, X, 21 (November-December, 1917) and on page one of the Times for September 28, 1917.

11 Ray Stannard Baker, Woodrow Wilson (New York, 1939), VII, 273. Various letters and conversations recorded during this year revealed that Wilson was in doubt about the treatment of the socialist press. Believing that many socialists were traitors, he was pressed by democratic beliefs and by many liberals to check the suppression. Although he constantly affirmed the sanctity of freedom of the press and wrote a note or two to Furlson indicating concern about the injustice of the methods being used, the President went no further. There were, of course, many things demanding his time.

President, after which Wilson spoke to Burleson about going easy with well-intentioned people who needed to blow off steam. Burleson made the Masses case an issue. "If you don't want the Espionage Act enforced, I can resign," said the Postmaster General. "Congress has passed the law and has said that I am to enforce it. We are going into war, and these men are discouraging enlistment." The President laughed and said, "Well, go ahead and do your duty."¹²

The suppression was complete with the decision of the United States Circuit of Appeals on November 2, 1917. The court upheld Postmaster Patten in excluding the magazine. Judge Henry W. Rogers, who wrote the decision, said the sole ground was obstructing the recruiting service and recommended the indictment of the editors and business manager under the Espionage Act. This decision automatically excluded the magazine from the newsstands since the Trading with the Enemy Act passed in October made newsdealers guilty if they carried material violating the Espionage Act. It was up to the newsdealers to decide, since they were guilty even if the crime was proved after they had offered the material for sale. The dealers would hardly risk prison for the Masses.¹³

Eastman, Dell, Reed, Young, Rogers, Glintenkamp and Josephine Bell were indicted by a Federal Grand Jury on November 19th for conspiracy to violate the Espionage Act, and the trial began April 15, 1918.

12 Ibid., 165. Told to Baker by Burleson in 1927. Oswald Garrison Villard, Fighting Years (New York, 1939), 357, reported that Solicitor General Lamar of the postoffice department said: "You know I am not working in the dark on this censorship thing. I know exactly what I am after. I am after three things and only three things -- pro-Germanism, pacifism, and 'high-browism.'" Was the Masses all three?

13 The decision and the newsdealers' ^{response} was reported in the New York Times, 10:3 (November 3, 1917).

Although the Masses had been forced to cease publication with the issue of November-December, 1917, the case was fully reported in the June issue of its successor, The Liberator. Reed was in Russia, Glintenkamp had run off to Mexico City, and Josephine Bell was dismissed when it was revealed that she could not be a conspirator since she was not personally known to the editors before the legal proceedings.¹⁴ Morris Hillquit and Dudley Field Malone were the attorneys for the defense, opposed by Earl Barnes.

The prosecution attempted to prove conspiracy to "obstruct the recruiting and enlistment service of the United States" with disaffection in the services as a side line, but made no effort to show either that anyone had actually been obstructed or that the magazine tried to reach men of the right age. Letters and telegrams were submitted by Barnes, however, to reveal that orders for the magazine did come from both college students and army officers. The district attorney made some attempt to show by old minutes from a controversial Masses meeting that there was conspiracy, but this was exploded by Young, who told the story of the revolt of the artists which was the subject of the minutes, and no other concrete evidence was introduced. The peculiar cooperative nature of the magazine made conspiracy difficult to establish. Since the August

¹⁴ Josephine Bell's poem was called "A Tribute" and was a protest against the jailing of Goldman and Berkman. Although the poem had little merit, her dismissal did not come, as Young suggested, through the judge's literary criticism, but as a legal matter. See Hillquit, Loose Leaves, 227-8. Eastman and Dell were indicted for the material mentioned at the first hearing, Reed for a headline "Knit a Strait-Jacket for Your Soldier Boy," Glintenkamp for a cartoon of death measuring a nude boy for a coffin, and Young for his cartoon, "Having Their Fling." Parts of the trial story appeared in the autobiographies of Eastman, Dell, Young, Untermeyer and Hillquit. Chafee dealt with the trial. The New York Times gave only brief summaries of each day, except for Creel's testimony, which was chiefly important because Creel was important. The fullest surviving account, seemingly accurate although from the defendant's side, seems to be in The Liberator.

number was made up during the summer when most of the staff was out of New York, the difficulty of proof was insuperable. As a result, the case was prosecuted almost entirely on the grounds of patriotism and general opposition to radicalism. No evidence of direct pro-German sympathies was established, nor were German financial sources indicated, although Barnes apparently had some indirect evidence on this point which was not admitted by the judge. All that remained was to stress the prejudices against socialists and pacifists and the spectre of anarchism as they were opposed to love of country and the heroic sacrifice of soldier's blood. The defendants were pictured as particularly dangerous because of their intelligence and abilities. Barnes, as Dell pointed out, was only doing his duty in taking full advantage of the war hysteria.

The defense boldly accepted the challenge of radicalism, as indeed they were forced to do. Eastman gave the bulk of the testimony. For almost three days, the stand was turned into a lecture platform while he gave what amounted to lectures on socialism, war and the relationship of both to Americans and the policy of the President and the government. "It did not seem a trial," said Hillquit in a post-trial speech at a celebration banquet. "It had the appearance of a university for uneducated, unenlightened American citizens in the jury box and outside it (applause). They were instructed upon the fundamental rights under the Constitution which it is alleged this new bill seeks to uphold. They were instructed upon the rights of American citizens to think for themselves on all vital questions, including the question of war and peace and conscription."¹⁵

¹⁵ The Liberator, I, 21 (June, 1918).

The conspiracy was dismissed by the defendants as unproved and completely foolish as a charge in the face of the repeated efforts of the editors to bring their magazine to the attention of the authorities from Creel to Wilson. The sole question was the guarantee of free speech and press to men whose intent, although opposed to the government's policies, was as fully patriotic as any thinking man's. As the debate leading to conscription and the war showed, as Wilson's 1916 campaign and the narrow margin of victory showed, there was honest disagreement between two groups of thinkers. To the Masses' editors, a state of war drew no line across this disagreement based on intelligence, and the welfare of the nation demanded that the government be subject to opposition in peace or war if democracy and liberty were to be saved. Such freedom was not only necessary to patriotism from a reasonable viewpoint, but was fortunately fundamentally guaranteed to all American citizens unless they were specifically violating a law, a violation which, in this case, had not been proved either in act or intention. "Constitutional rights cannot be surrendered and cannot be regained," said Hillquit in his closing speech. "They are not a gift. They are the conquest by this nation, as they were a conquest by the English nation. They can never be taken away, and if returned, if given back after the war, they will never again have the same potent, vivifying force of expressing the democratic soul of a nation. They will be a gift to be given, to be taken, at the behest, at the whim or will or caprice of any individual or group of individuals."¹⁶ The jury was challenged to throw aside all ideas of agreement or disagreement with ^{the} defendants, to refuse to weigh the case as a measure of their

¹⁶ Ibid., 16.

own patriotism, to apply to it only the test of constitutional rights.¹⁷

The charge to the jury by Judge Augustus M. Hand,¹⁸ stated clearly and succinctly that any man had the constitutional right to express any opinion whatsoever, however ill-timed, improper or even immoral, if he did not violate a specific law. "If it was the conscious purpose of

17 While the defendants fought the battle on free speech and press grounds, Eastman, Dell and Rogers had changed their minds about the war. After the bitter treaty of Brest-Litovsk had been forced on the Russians, the editors found themselves more sympathetic to American participation. Russia was carrying the Socialist burden. Support for Russia was reinforced by President Wilson's tacit acceptance of the Russian peace aims in his letter to the Pope. A part of Eastman's testimony has been frequently cited to show the failure of revolutionary courage on trial. Barnes asked him if he still thought so bitterly of the religion of patriotism. "My sentiments have changed a good deal," replied the editor as reported in the June issue of The Liberator. "I think that when the boys begin to go over to Europe, and fight to the strains of that anthem [a recruiting band played under the courtroom window], you feel very different about it. You noticed when it was played out there in the street the other day, I did stand up." Here the quotation usually stops. Although none of the defendants wished to spend twenty years in prison, the editor continued to apply his newly-found patriotism against the government and the district attorney's office. "I felt very sad;" Eastman went on, "I felt very solemn, very sorrowful, because I thought of those boys over there dying by the thousands, perhaps destined to die by millions, with courage and even laughter on their lips, because they are dying for liberty. And I thought how terrible a thing it is that while they are dying over there, while the country is gradually coming to a feeling of the solemnity and seriousness of that thing, the Department of Justice should be compelling men of your distinguished ability, and others like you, all over the country, to waste their time, persecuting upright American citizens, when they might be hunting up the spies of the enemy, and the profiteers and friends of Prussianism in this country and prosecuting them." Although perhaps not properly revolutionary and rebellious in the romantic sense, Eastman's speech, which began cautiously, ended with an indictment of the villains the Masses had been pursuing all the time. The New York Times, 9: 3, 6 (April 3, 1917) reported the speech in a reportorial summary placed in direct quotations. Although obviously not Eastman's words, the content was generally the same with the exception of the elimination of the "profiteers" at the end.

18 Note that the presiding Judge was the brother of the Judge Learned Hand who presided at the first hearing at which the Masses challenged the government.

the defendants to state truth as they saw it;" he said, "to do this clearly and persuasively in order to lead others to see things in the same way, with the object to bring about modification, reconstruction or re-shaping of national policy in accordance with what they believed right and true, and that obstruction of the recruiting and enlistment service was not their object, the jury cannot find them guilty."¹⁹ The Liberator reprinted part of the charge as "The Rights of Citizens," but the jury was not convinced that these rights applied to the Masses' case and after two harried days could not agree on a verdict. They were dismissed, and the government, equally unconvinced, immediately moved for a new trial.²⁰

The second trial, in October, also resulted in disagreement, but the conditions were somewhat different. John Reed, who had returned from Russia, was present in court this time and reported the trial for The Liberator. "The second trial of the Masses case, although a political trial, differed in many respects from the conventional Espionage case," he wrote. "All the defendants were Americans, of old American lineage. The Judge, Martin Manton, allowed them a good deal of latitude in proving their intent. The jury was open to impressions. The case was tried in New York City, where the hysterical war spirit has never got the hold it has in the more provincial districts of the Middle West. And, finally, the tensivity of the patriotic feeling, kept at a stretch for more than a

19 The Liberator, I, 35 (June, 1918). This section of the charge was, of course, reprinted because it was favorable to the defendants. The portion pointing to conviction was not reprinted, and has apparently not survived.

20 The final vote was ten to two for conviction. The jury majority asked permission, not forbidden, to reveal the dissenters. They were clearly stubborn, opposed to justice, and probably socialist, pacifist and pro-German. A government investigation of the jury was hinted.

year, had begun to slacken."²¹

Perhaps more important to the outcome was the shift in attitude of the defendants. Although still aware of the possibility of twenty years imprisonment, the second Russian revolution, the invasion of Siberia by American troops and the increasingly bitter persecution of socialists and other radicals made them bolder in affirming the right to disagree with just and honest intent. Eastman defended the St. Louis Proclamation, Dell defended conscientious objectors, and Reed defended the class war with evidence fresh from Russia. Eastman's three hour summary accepted the challenge of Earl Barnes that they were bolsheviki and made the Russian struggle for freedom a part of the defense, for which Reed gave him the major credit for another negative victory. Judge Manton, in his final charge, repeated with equal strength the legal support of constitutional rights which had been affirmed by Judge Augustus Hand. The jury disagreed permanently on the second ballot, eight to four for acquittal, and the case was dismissed when the government did not press for a third trial. An official of the District Attorney's office told Reed, as he reported, "You are Americans. You looked like Americans You can't convict an American for sedition before a New York Judge."²²

21 The Liberator, I, 36 (December, 1918). Hillquit and Malone were not available for this trial, and Seymour Stedman, with no opportunity for preparation, hurried from Chicago to act for the defense. If less brilliant than the earlier lawyers, he was as firm. His common-sense earthiness, according to Reed, had a marked effect on the jury. Earl Barnes again acted for the prosecution, adding to his weapons the terms "Bolsheveeka" and "Syndickalism," again according to Reed, who was characterizing the district attorney's ignorance.

22 Ibid., 37. Reed attributed the deadlocked jury to one man, a Roman Catholic, who vowed to the jury that his faith forbade him ever to let a Socialist go. The charge was not documented, but the briefness of the deliberations supports the suggestion that some such firmness convinced the majority that further deliberation was hopeless.

With this negative victory, the Masses vanished into history and an indefinite classification as an "influence." "In a democracy in peacetime," wrote James Mock, "individuals or groups may select as many enemies as they please and struggle against them. During a war, these domestic enemies -- for example, nicotine, indecent dress, vested interests, labor agitators, corrupt politicians and many others -- must be forgotten in the fight against the wartime enemy, namely, the foreign power or powers."²³ Although as the career of the magazine indicated, the fight against domestic enemies was not as easy as Mock suggested; yet the Masses had survived, only to fall a victim to war and a censorship far more direct than that of the Associated Press or Ward and Gow.

Both the method of suppression and the trials provided one of many precedents used ruthlessly after the war was over. Wartime measures "were used to stamp out evils that, in too many instances, were evils only in the opinion of groups applying the restrictions."²⁴ An aroused community lost its wits, and no amount of democratic or legal idealism could prevent repression whether the cause lay in hysteria, devotion to a narrow concept of duty or skillful Machiavellian manipulation. Yet the editors did fight the censorship, and they were not convicted. Although the magazine was destroyed, in its death it left legal precedents of great importance to future dissenters. The magazine served a cause at the end which it had defended from the beginning -- the freedom of intelligent and sensitive men and women to make a better world.

23 Mock, Censorship, 1917, 3.

24 Ibid., 230. See the famous Lusk Committee report published as Revolutionary Radicalism, Its History, Purpose and Tactics (Albany, 1920), 4 vols.

Two developments obscured an evaluation of the Masses: the radical split during the nineteen-twenties and the complete Russian dominance of the Third International. The issue of "playboyism" and "Bohemianism" as it was related to the magazine was considered in Chapter VI, and need not be recapitulated. The division of radicalism into the sharp split of dogmatic Communism and purely aesthetic "Greenwich Villagism" during the first post-war decade was rather a marked illustration of the traumatic effect of the war experience than a comment on the Masses. The magazine felt, as has been shown, no essential conflict between individual freedom and social revolution, indeed they necessarily complemented each other. The American dream of having your cake and eating it too which marked Franklin's pragmatic approach to benevolence and Emerson's Yankee approach to transcendental values ran strongly through the magazine. Only an a posteriori judgment can obscure the healthy balance advocated by the Masses and demonstrated in its columns by confusing 1915 with 1925 or later.

A more serious problem lay in the adherence of the magazine to Marx and socialism, when to later generations this meant iron-clad dictatorship by a foreign power -- Soviet Russia. The magazine had greeted the unauthorized rise to power of the Council of Workingmen's and Soldiers' Delegates within the Kerensky government with joy. So overwhelming was the news that it seemed that "all the esoteric terminology of the Marxian theory that used to be locked up in the Rand School library, or employed to enliven in Jewish accent the academic deliberations of East side debating societies, is now flashed in the despatches of the Associated Press from one end of the world to the other The names of our theories have become the names of current facts And it is

this transfer of economic control, prospective or already accomplished, which, with the democratization of the army, explains, and also certifies, the power of the workmen's and soldiers' parliament. In the long run they who control the forces of production control the state."²⁵

Whether or not the revolution succeeded, and the editor was very skeptical of the possibility in a feudal state such as Russia had been, a failure "may be accounted incident to its success in clearing and verifying the way forward," wrote Eastman. "It has established us and made us sure. A working-class will yet own the tools with which it works, and an industrial parliament will yet govern the co-operative affairs of men."²⁶ The apparent defeat of world socialism in 1914 suddenly seemed irrelevant. Growing despair was replaced by triumphant hope.

The repression of revolutionary forces within the United States confirmed the focus on Russia. In October, 1917, the magazine virtually surrendered the United States to dictatorship in a summarized report from the leaders of the Root mission to Russia, Elihu Root and Charles E. Russell, to the Union League Club. The Masses paraphrased the conclusions: Free speech and liberty of opinion in America must be suppressed. All who do not agree with the government are traitors and must be shot at sunrise. To hell with the constitution."²⁷ In the issue for November-December, Young drew a cartoon of a sanctified and benevolent Karl Marx

25 IX, 5-6 (August, 1917).

26 Loc. cit. A practical theorist like Eastman felt, perhaps, much as a theoretical, yet humanistic scientist who discovers that the esoteric work of the study leads directly to the concrete proof of actual industrial progress. The impact was overwhelming, both emotional and intellectual.

27 IX, 8 (October, 1917).

brooding over scattered newspaper pages filled with stories of socialism, and with that issue the magazine was suppressed.²⁸ Fighting a losing battle at home, the Masses' editors began an actual or spiritual trek to Soviet Russia, finding there for a time the only hope for liberty for the masses. Triumphantlly battling on home ground in 1912, they were routed in 1917 and forced to find vicarious success abroad. The road "Towards Liberty" took a long foreign detour.

A superficial thumbing of the magazine might lead to the belief that Russia was the goal of the Masses, although the editors were as yet undisciplined and perhaps not yet aware of the true proletarian light. Actually, the magazine was working in an American tradition as incomprehensible to Russia as Russian absolutism is to most Americans. The later "apostasy" from Russian Communism of most of the Masses' group was actually, as the careful perusal of the magazine shows, no betrayal at all, but the logical development of men opposed to dictatorship and dogma in the name of liberty and scientific, experimental thinking. For the extreme left, the Masses was too individual, for the extreme right, too social. Only these two dogmas can rightly indict the magazine as un-revolutionary or un-American -- and the "Party Line" and the Masses were sworn enemies from the beginning.

The Masses was pragmatic and democratic. But the editors were doing hard thinking and shrewd and vivid observing of twentieth century industrial society and trying to find new answers and apply old ones in new ways. When they could least be spared, most of them marched in temporarily disciplined formation down a very dark alley. American radical

28 X, 15 (November-December, 1917).

thought, that continuous pressure for an impossibly better world which is so essential in a democracy, had to be reborn from the defeated movement so blazingly recorded in the pages of the Masses. For the future, the magazine left both understanding and inspiration despite its mistakes and ultimate catastrophe. In the trial by posterity, the magazine must still bear the stigmas of "socialist" and "radical," yet the verdict reveals a sturdy extension of America and an anticipation of the reality of the American struggle of later years.

The Masses set out to demonstrate the nature of a truly free and creative magazine based on independence from the demands of the market, high standards of excellence and the importance of social cooperation as a continuous stimulus. The editors believed that the individual creator needed the fullest realization of the society in which he lived to give his work vitality, interest, truth and continuous growth. They believed that a work of art should be respected and allowed to exist through the best possible placement and reproduction in their magazine, but they also insisted upon a framework of ideas, social in nature, which provided the unity against which variety shone with a special luster. Although they could not permanently solve the financial problem to free the contributors, they did demonstrate that a cooperative effort which was founded on the excellence of individual work could produce an unusual and vivid magazine.

The key to the Masses' social analysis of American political democracy was the repeated insistence on the temporary nature of political reform of a social system which had evolved from agrarianism into an industrial state. The stress upon new answers evolved from scientific knowledge, and an instrumental approach based on the hypothesis that in an

industrial society the foundation stone was industrial labor, regrettably rejected the excitement of the Wilsonian reforms and pointed up the danger to all progressive thought of a failure to understand new economic organization. The reaction of the nineteen-twenties confirmed the conclusion. At the same time, the Masses' analysis stressed the threat of dictatorship or oligarchy from both right and left. The bitter results of the fourth and fifth decades supported the warning. Only a continuously free and democratic state which understood modern society could provide the needed transition from purely political democracy based on individual isolation to economic democracy based on a tightly integrated industrial world. A failure to remain democratic and keep in mind the ultimate goal of liberty for all could only result in dogmatic authoritarianism as the Masses saw the problem. Not even their free adherence to Marxism could divert the Masses' editors from building on, rather than rejecting, American democracy.

To the Masses, the basic unit of the new society which had been created and already existed in reality was labor. In dealing with the problems of labor, the magazine stressed the need for the organization of the unskilled, the powerful opposition of a tightly organized management which dominated the public instruments of the state and the courts and controlled the private instruments of the press and the church. The editors realized the violence of the labor struggle so keenly that their final conclusion was that politics could do little or nothing at the time and that organized power to oppose power was the only solution for helpless labor. Many forces were operating to change the nature of labor relations, but the Masses was, in a major part, correctly interpreting the nature of labor's needs. In their vivid and emotional story of injustice

to labor, the magazine helped to produce the future, if only in a small way. Even the secondary method of politics, although in another than the Socialist party, became a reality as the strength of labor to oppose power was established.

The fight for labor did not seem to come true for a time, but for women suffrage, sexual freedom, economic rights for women and free and progressive education for children, the Masses was almost immediately on the winning side. Yet one goal differentiated the magazine from ordinary feminism, then or later. The editors were never narrowly feminist, fighting for freedom for the sake of revolt or the domination of women. They wished for women what they wished for men, the whole human life and freedom to be a complete individual within a society which was directed toward the production of liberty for all. Politics, economics and sex were subordinate in the larger aim. The treatment of the cause of women was an excellent illustration of the scope of the Masses and its freedom from a narrow dogmatism which would be satisfied with a change in the control of the state. With idealistic devotion, the editors demonstrated liberty for the individual as they worked for social change to produce liberty.

The fundamental idealism of the Masses was illustrated in the attack on organized religion. With a kind of ethical atheism far removed from naive, iconoclastic agnosticism, the magazine insisted upon reconciling a departure from organized Christianity with the reality of spiritual forces in man. Completely rejecting an anthropomorphic God or Son of God, the Masses held to social aims which could take up the whole of man's religious impulse, instinctive in nature and ineradicable. The concept of the fullest development of the individual was not characterized by completely nihilistic materialism, but held within an ethical framework by

the social aims which emerged from an analysis of the nature of man in modern society.

The artistic aims of the Masses were equally serious. Rejecting Bohemian trifling and what seemed to them an anarchistic devotion to art for art's sake, yet devoting themselves to a premise of technical excellence based on individual craftsmanship which allowed for the widest range of artistic creation, the Masses joined a recognition of the special nature of the artist with what seemed to the editors an absolute necessity for social participation. The artist needed to be a whole man with humor and a recognition of social aims. Given this premise, the most diverse individual expression would fit somewhere on the scale. Although the editors' devotion to representational realism eliminated a consideration of many vital currents of modern art, still the excellence and variety of their results was a demonstration of the correctness of the thesis for their group. Comparison with other periodicals reinforced the Masses' claim that excellence was the product of the individual artist, of his sense of belonging with his fellows and of keen social awareness.

In literature, the Masses again demonstrated the validity of a dual standard, individual and social. The rejection of dogmatic propaganda for the reality of life led them to a significant participation in the twentieth-century revival of American literature as it was manifested in realism and naturalism. In language and content, the magazine contributed to poetry; in new ideas and insights and a vital realistic method, the magazine contributed to prose; in a flexible standard accepting the new if it had reality and truth, the magazine contributed to criticism. If the Masses could come less close than in art to demonstrating excellence, especially in poetry, the insistence of the editors upon the

combination of individual excellence with a social standard paralleled the editors' approach to all areas of human life. The need for expression was basic to liberty. Undogmatically, they were aware of the special weighting to be given the individual in both pictures and poems, and they found this subjective nature of art to be good, rather than an evil to be rejected because it did not fit a propaganda line.

Finally, in their treatment of war, the Masses' editors were led to reject war, yet understand it on the basis of a psychological analysis which showed the need for the substitution of other satisfactions. The internationalism which resulted was a human rather than a strictly socialist world plan. It was opposed to militarism, censorship and conscription as manifestations of that dictatorship over the free mind which was always the result of authoritarian dogma. The Masses' editors had great courage, and their heroism was not the easy fanaticism of blind devotion to a cause, but the more difficult loyalty to truth as they saw it, freed as completely as possible from authority to deal with the world both as it was and as it should be. From this point of view, they joined the company of great intellectual heroes from Socrates to Thoreau.

Clearly emerging from all of the Masses' interests was the central problem of the twentieth century: how may the individual and his needs be reconciled with an interdependent industrial society. The Masses' answer was unequivocally for a synthesis, which seemed to the editors the only rational solution. They wanted to realize the actual world of machines and understand it, but they never lost sight of the men who make up mankind. They wanted revolutionary new ideas for their revolutionary world, but always in the name of liberty, democracy and truth. They dealt with the actual nature of man in society and always rejected absolutism of any

kind.

At the same time, there was something simpler and more optimistic than later attempts to solve the same problem. After the first trial, Dell attempted to say how the editors felt when their magazine was gone:²⁹

. . . . And we of the Masses, who created a magazine unique in the history of journalism, a magazine of our own in which we could say what we thought about everything in the world, had all of us in some respect belonged to a minority. We did not agree with other people about a lot of things. We did not even agree with each other about many things. We were fully agreed only upon one point, that it was a jolly thing to have a magazine in which we could freely express our individual thoughts and feelings in stories and poems and pictures and articles and jokes. And when the war came we were found still saying what we individually thought about everything -- including war. No two of us thought quite alike about it. But none of us said exactly what the morning papers were saying.

At the very last, the Masses was alive and remains alive because in it there were men and not theories, intense life which communicated itself on every vital issue of the time. This spirit remains vital, even when the issues are dead and gone.

However radical it seemed, the Masses was a brilliant expression of the democratic, progressive, liberal mind. More than this, it was an expression of the twentieth century energetically attempting to deal with the intricacies of modern industrial life with the instruments of a science of the mind and society which was rooted in love of humanity and respect for individual men. Facing the interdependence of modern life, the contributors chose to grapple with their world in the name of both the individual and the society of which he was an organic part. Neither could be sacrificed in a world dedicated to liberty and justice. The

29 The Liberator, I, 7 (June, 1918).

free mind, science and beauty; the individual ever more alive in a world which needed always to be made better; courage and humor and faith in the reality of justice; these ideals the Masses left as a legacy to the liberal spirit in an industrial world.

APPENDIX A

PUBLICATION DATA

TITLE: Masses.

FIRST ISSUE: January, 1911

LAST ISSUE: November-December, 1917.

PERIODICITY: Monthly except September through November, 1912. October-November, 1915 and November-December, 1917 were combined issues. Annual volumes from 1913 -- 1917. Volume numbers irregular: Vol. I, January -- December, 1911; Vol. II, omitted; Vol. III, January -- June, 1912; Vol. IV, July, 1912 -- September, 1913; Vol. V, October, 1913 -- September, 1914; Vol. VI, October, 1914 -- September, 1915; Vol. VII, October-November, 1915 only; Vol. VIII, December, 1915 -- October, 1916 (11 numbers); Vol. IX, November, 1916 -- October, 1917; and Vol. X, November-December, 1917 only. Bound volumes followed the calendar year.

PUBLISHER: The Masses Publishing Company.

EDITORS: Thomas Seltzer, January, 1911 -- April, 1911; Horatio Winslow, May, 1911 -- January, 1912; Piet Vlag, February, 1912 -- August, 1912; and Max Eastman, December, 1912 -- November-December, 1917. Contributing editors too numerous to list. Floyd Dell managing editor, January, 1914 -- November-December, 1917.

PRICE: 5 cents, January, 1911 -- January, 1912; 10 cents, February, 1912 -- July, 1916; and 15 cents, August, 1916 -- November-December, 1917.

PAGE SIZE: $10\frac{1}{2} \times 13\frac{1}{2}$, January, 1911 -- November, 1916; and $8\frac{1}{2} \times 11$, December, 1916 -- November-December, 1917.

NUMBER OF PAGES: Average 18, January, 1911 -- August, 1912; average 24, December, 1912 -- July, 1916; and average 44, August, 1916 -- November-December, 1917.

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

The bibliographical problem for the Masses is very great for a number of reasons: as a general periodical, it covered many subjects; as a comparatively recent publication, new material related to it continues to appear; and its radical nature both reduces the volume of directly relevant comment and makes evaluation of sources difficult. The amount of material on such subjects as feminism, religion, war and revolution is staggering, even when limited to the concerns of the second decade. Especially, periodical sources of the time are nearly inexhaustible, and with a few exceptions directly concerned with the Masses, they have been excluded from consideration. The New York Times, however, has regularly been consulted, and many magazines have been examined, although a necessary principle of selection dictated their exclusion from careful study. The "general" bibliography includes a selection from those comprehensive studies which give a background to the study of the Masses. The "special" bibliography includes a selection of those items particularly relevant to the magazine, its contributors and editors or important matters with which the Masses was particularly concerned.

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